

JOSEPH.

Joseph. [Genesis 37 to 45](#)

"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. " It is possible that Isaac was still alive at this time.

In this chapter we start the story of Joseph, the record of the events associated with his story involves most of the following chapters. The story of Joseph shows the hand of God at work over many years. Joseph was Jacob's eldest son of his much loved wife **Rachel**, Joseph was born of a mother who was unable to have children at first, it was a long time before the child was born and so any child was special to the father Jacob.

"Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age:" As a sign of his love for Joseph, Jacob had made for him "a coat of many colours." This was a coat made up of stripes of differently colored cloth and this coat was a symbol of this great love Jacob had for Joseph. As a result of this action, his brothers thought that their father was about to ignore their right to all of possessions of Jacob and make Joseph the only heir to all of Jacob's property, therefore Joseph was hated by the rest of his brother's and they would not speak to Joseph or "behave in a friendly manner," probably they were continually quarrelling with him.

Joseph's dreams.

[Genesis 37:5-11.](#)

Joseph is now a teenager and to make this relationship with his brothers even worse. Joseph has two dreams, divine revelation from God,

See [Psalms 105:17](#);

[Act 7:9](#);

[Hebrews 11:22.](#)

Joseph told his brothers of these dreams and their content, when his brothers heard of the content they hated Joseph even more.

Joseph could have been more diplomatic as he told his brothers, and later his father, of the two dreams, but this information was from God and needed to be passed on, it was His will as to what was the final result.

The first dream: Joseph said that in his dream they were in a field together, where they were collecting and tying up the bundles of grain stalks and sheaves after the harvest. Then Joseph's sheaf stands up, and all the sheaves produce by the brothers also stand up around the sheaf collected by Joseph and bowed down to his sheaf. This action would be indicating that they were going to bow down to Joseph, this really made them angry, "Us, bow down to him!!"

The second dream: In this dream Joseph reported that he saw *"the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to Joseph,"* this time he also told his father. The dream indicated that the sun and moon, representing Jacob and Rachel and the stars representing the eleven sons of Jacob, would all bow down to Joseph. Jacob was also now very angry because it was not normal for a son to be over the father's position in those days. If Jacob had thought about the dreams he might have realized that God was sending messages, as He had done to him in his dreams years before, Jacob would not then have been so hurt by the apparent death of Joseph, the dream showed Joseph very much alive in the future, he should have had faith that as God was in control he would be seeing Joseph again,

See [Psalm 105:17](#),

"He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant". It was the plans of God that Joseph was to go to Egypt, the following chapters records how He did it.

As we know the end of the story, it is very easy to criticize Jacobs action, it was also obvious that Joseph did not fully understand what the dreams signified either.

Does God still speak to us today in dreams, or is the method of communication only through the Holy Spirit using the scripture of the Bible, the Word of God? The Old Testament is full of communication through dreams, but it does not seem to be so common in the New Testament, for example: Joseph, the husband of Mary,

[Matthew 1:20-25.](#)

Paul, seems to have received instruction, warnings via visions or dreams,

[Acts 16:9;](#)

[Acts 22:17,18,](#)

But it does not seem a very common means of communication by God, however, it does not mean that He has not used this method but we must be very careful if others make claims on receiving instruction and guidance through their dreams. Remember Satan can also induce or influence our thoughts while asleep,

[Jeremiah 23:23-32.](#)

If necessary God can use dreams to communicate His will and directions, but today it is normally via the Spirit and the Word of God,

[John 14:25-26;](#)

[John 16:12-15.](#)

Comparison of the life of Joseph with the life of Jesus.

The Bible is all about Jesus and we are told to search the scriptures to find out about Him,

[John 5:39.](#)

The story of the life of Joseph is an illustration of the life of Jesus, here we have a story recorded showing the divine action of God and how he has full control and that His plan to be fulfilled it can involve suffering for an individual or a group of people.

Consider the life of Joseph:

- 1) He was the father's favourite.
- 2) He was misused by his brethren.
- 3) He became a prime minister of Egypt, a very powerful nation at the time.
- 4) Joseph received his family back and gave them forgiveness for their actions.

The beloved Son, The fathers devotion.

[Genesis 37:1-3.](#)

The story starts with a 17 Years old boy who is with some of his family, children of the slave wives of Israel (Jacob). Joseph is a righteous boy and he has problems with the evil natures of his brothers and reports back to the father what they are doing.

Israel has a special love for Joseph as he is the child of Rachel his true love and in addition Joseph was born in his old age.

As a sign of this relationship Jacob has made Joseph a coat of many colours, a sign that Joseph is very special to Jacob.

[Genesis 37:3.](#)

Jacob has a special love for his son Joseph, the coat was a sign of this love.

God has a special love for His son Jesus, beloved of the father and here are two places recorded of this fact:

[Matthew 3:17.](#)

At the baptism of Jesus God spoke "This is my son....."

[Matthew 17:5.](#)

At the transfiguration God spoke from heaven, "This is my son....."

Names:

The name "Joseph" means "he shall add."

Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation",

- [Matthew 1:21.](#) "his name is JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." ie Saves, offers life.

His relationship with others.

[Genesis 37:2-4.](#)

Joseph had a righteous nature, he is a sinner, as all are sinners, but there is no record of him actually committing a sin.

Note: [Hebrews 7:26.](#)

Why did his brothers hate him so much?

a) Joseph was a man who spoke only the truth, his brother's seemed to be out to do everything which was of benefit to them personally so did not like to be associated with someone who is truthful.

The world hates Jesus, not because of his physical position, his birth, his life etc., but that he spoke the truth, His words examine the persons heart, then reveals how evil their nature is,

[John 7:7.](#)

b) Joseph had a coat of many colours as a sign that he was different, he spoke the truth. Jesus can reveal his glory, His "coat of many colours". It showed that he was the favourite of his father, Jacob, he was special.

[Psalm 45:7.](#)

The people wanted to hear what Jesus had to say and teach, even the children were happy to come to him because they realized that he was different.

Jesus and Joseph's future positions.

[Genesis 37:9-11.](#)

God revealed to Joseph, through dreams, that one day he would be in a position of power and that his brothers would have to bow down to him.

Joseph to be lifted up to a position of power,

[Genesis 37:5,6.](#)

Jesus to be lifted up, On a cross which lead to a position of power,

[Matt 26:63,64.](#)

Jesus and Joseph are to be the suffering servants.

[Genesis 37:12-18.](#)

The father sends Joseph to his brothers,

[Genesis 37:12,13.](#)

Jesus is sent to earth by the Father,

[1 John 4:10,](#)

Jesus and Joseph are the scorned ones

[Genesis 37:4.](#)

The brothers hated Joseph, they were full of envy, so jealous that they sat eating with Joseph but crying to be set free,

[Genesis 42:21.](#)

Why, because they could not accept the possible future as given in the dreams of Joseph. "He will never reign over us,"

[Genesis 37:8.](#)

Envy is one of the works of the flesh, [Mark 7:21-23;](#)

[Galatians 5:19-21,](#)

As a result Joseph was to receive great suffering, but it was all part of the plan's of God.

The Jewish leaders and many of the Jewish people hated Jesus because he told the truth and therefore threatened their way of living and possible employment,

[John 15:24.](#)

Because the Jews and the world hate Jesus they therefore hated the Father. "He will not reign over us,"

[Luke 19:14.](#)

The start of the suffering.

[Genesis 37:18-28.](#)

a) **The brothers made a conspiracy, a plan to put Joseph to death,**

[Genesis 37:18.](#)

Joseph was put in a water storage pit with no way out, stripped of his protection and given no supplies of food or water, so it was obvious that he would eventually die.

[Genesis 37:23,24.](#)

b) Why did Jacob send Joseph knowing of their hatred for him, a servant could have easily done the task?

The answer is easy, God was in charge of the situation.

c) Why were the brothers feeding their flocks so far from their home?

They did not know that Joseph was coming so did they have another motive? Perhaps they did not want anyone to know what they were up to in this part of the country, perhaps their acts were some illegal involvement with the local people, we are not told.

The Jews wanted to put Jesus to death, to remove Him so they did not have to worry about His words of truth.

[Matthew 26:3-5.](#)

c) Joseph was sold off by his brothers as a slave to a company of Ishmaelite's for 20 pieces of silver.

All the brothers could think of was how to get rid of their problem, answer, slaves in Egypt would not be set free. In addition the brothers were making some money out of it.

The brothers thought that no one would know the truth, no danger of their father finding out, but they forgot that God knows all things. God had given Jacob the covenant and had a special interest in Jacob and his family, God had a divine plan which had to be fulfilled,

[Romans 8:28.](#)

This does not mean that God approved of the action or the hatred of the brothers, they were free to make the choice and therefore still guilty of the evil, but God was able to use these events to fulfil His programme.

Compare the sermon of Peter as an example in,

[Acts 3:12-26.](#)

Reuben, the eldest son, was not present when Joseph was sold and indicated that he did not approve of his brother's action. But, the event was now history and so the brothers together had to lie about the incident, and as a result to make their father suffer, note Jacob had lied many years before to deceive his father, he reaped what he had sown!

[Genesis 27:1-17.](#)

It is interesting that the idea to sell Joseph came from Judah, the name Judah is a similar name and has the same meaning to the name Judas. It was a close friend of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, who went unto the chief priests and was willing to betray Jesus, to sell him off for 30 pieces of silver,

[Matthew 26:14-16.](#)

Death.

[Genesis 37:31-34.](#)

The brothers pretended that Joseph had been killed by animals, they had used animal blood to fake the blood on the coat, then they produced the coat for Jacob soaked in blood as the evidence. This means that as far as the brothers believed, Joseph was dead, because he had been taken off into another country, which was a long way away. Unlike today, travel over large distances was very difficult, therefore there was very little chance of Joseph returning. Note, later in the story they admitted that "we have killed him."

[Genesis 42:21,22.](#)

The father of Joseph was totally broken hearted when he saw the coat covered in blood, it was obvious that he thought that his beloved son, Joseph the child of his beloved Rachel, was dead.

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, suffered and then died, what did the Father feel as His son took on the sins of the world, "Why have you forsaken me?"

However, the people preferred an evil man, "*Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*" [Matthew 27:26,27.](#)

An Interruption

Genesis 38 seems to interrupt the story of Joseph but it shows the passing of time for Joseph, he was seventeen when sold by his brothers and thirty when he was placed in the position of power in Egypt, thirteen years, if you now added the seven years of plenty and two years of famine, it is at least twenty-two years before the brothers next see Joseph, plenty of time for this record of Judah to be married and have a family.

Why is there a record of this with reference to Judah? It is Judah who is the royal tribe from which the Messiah was to come, without this record we would not know about Tamar and Perez, as recorded in,

[Matthew 1:3.](#)

Perez was an ancestor of King David,

[Ruth 4:18-22.](#)

Adullam was a town about 15 miles, (24 km) NW of Hebron, Judah was visiting for some reason and saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite. This shows the danger of ignoring religious belief to satisfy the personal desires. Judah wanted to take a wife from a Canaanite family not a Jewish family. It is not surprising that the family which grew from such an unsuitable relationship became famous for wickedness, *"There Judah married a Canaanite (verse 2), and there his firstborn was slain by the Lord for acting wickedly,"*

[Genesis 37:7.](#)

It was normal at that time, according to the law of Moses, that the younger brother would marry the wife of a dead older brother,

see [Deuteronomy 25:5.](#)

"Judah said unto Onan (the younger brother) that he is to marry Tamar, his dead brothers wife, and raise up seed to thy brother," but Onan would not obey, he was greedy, for a son born to Tamar would receive the major portion of the inheritance. If no child was born, then Onan, the next in line, would be the recipient of the fathers wealth. "The thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also." He is slain, not for using a means of contraception, but because he failed in his family duty. Tamar returns to her family to wait for the next son, Shelah, to become old enough to marry her.

The story continues, sometime later, Judah loses his wife and goes to Adullam, there he sees Tamar, who, on seeing Judah, disguised herself as an harlot, Judah does not recognize her and now commits adultery with her, the result is that Tamar conceives twins, Pharez and Zarah.

[\(Genesis 38:28-30.](#)

Although Zerah's hand appeared first, Pharez was actually born first and is therefore listed in the genealogy of Christ,

[Matthew 1:3\).](#)

The story of Joseph, Continues.

[Genesis 39:1ff](#)

Joseph is in Egypt where *"Potiphar, (meaning, "dedicated to RA; ie, to the SUN-GOD,") an Egyptian, who bought Joseph from the Ishmaelite's."* Potiphar was an officer of Pharaoh, the title of "captain of the guard," suggests he may have been an officer of the personal body guard of Pharaoh or an officer of the state police of Pharaoh. While they formed part of the Egyptian army, they were also employed in civil duties such as "chief of the executioners."

Joseph becomes a servant of Potiphar where Joseph, though a foreigner, gradually gained the confidence of Potiphar, *"his master, who worshipped Egyptian gods, some how saw that the True LORD was with him, the LORD made all that Joseph did to prosper in his hand."* It is very interesting how God works out His plans. An important point which regularly appears as this story develops "the LORD was with Joseph,"

[Genesis 39:4,](#)

In the many years since arriving in Egypt, Joseph had risen to the place of a senior slave and is in charge of all the affairs of Potiphar, Joseph is in charge of running the household, a position of great trust for Joseph would have access to all the facilities except the personal things of Potiphar, especially the wife of Potiphar. Unfortunately the wife had other ideas, her desires, "his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph;" and wanted a sexual relationship with him. Joseph's response to the regular approaches by her was *"how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* Eventually Joseph and Potiphar's wife were alone in the house, she tries to take full advantage of the situation, to satisfy her sinful desires, *"she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me:" and he left his garment in her hand, and fled."*

This woman hated to be rejected and now tells lies about the situation, accusing Joseph of terrible sins, which resulted in Joseph being put into prison, by Potiphar, for punishment. The prison was reserved for the king's prisoners, "but the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison."

It is amazing that God can use the evil desires of a woman to fulfil His plans, He needed Joseph in prison to make the future contact with the Pharaoh.

Joseph in prison.

"The LORD was with Joseph,"

"The keeper of the prison committed into Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison. " Joseph quickly became of great use to the jail keeper, who turned over all his work and responsibilities to Joseph,

yet it seems that no one was concerned with the fact and position of Joseph being in prison, we never hear of Potiphar again, he seems to have lost interest in Joseph, we presume that God has stopped blessing the Potiphar household. But God has not forgotten Joseph, He is working His plan out, but the time has not yet come to make the next move.

God moves onto His next stage of His plan.

[Genesis 40:1ff](#)

"And it came to pass after these things,"

Joseph had been hated by his brothers when he was at home but now Joseph was a source of blessing because God was with him. God had promised that the family of Abraham would be a blessing to the other nations,

[Genesis 12:1-3,](#)

And Joseph, because he worshiped the True God, was fulfilling that promise for those who were associated with him,

compare [Genesis 35:5,](#)

The home of Potiphar, despite Joseph being a foreign slave, who did not worship their god's, they saw honesty and faithful obedience. God has allowed Joseph to be treated in an unjust manner but He was actually teaching and training Joseph for his future position of power and trust, he had to wait on the Lord, the delay by God was not denial or forgotten.

Also compare [1 Peter 2:13-20](#) as given for Believers.

Joseph learns to interpret dreams

[Genesis 40:1-13; 16-22.](#)

Two servants of the Pharaoh had somehow upset the Pharaoh and were put into prison. One, the butler or cupbearer would have been in a position of great power. His job was to protect the Pharaoh by making sure that the wine was prepared and served in a safe manner and safe for Pharaoh to drink,

[Nehemiah 1:11 to 2:1.](#)

God has brought these two men into the life of Joseph as part of His plan for him. Joseph was made responsible for the daily care of these two men while in prison.

Sometime later these two men both had dreams. Dreams were a very important part of the life of Egyptians, and any one who could explain or interpret the meaning of dreams was considered special. Joseph enters their room in the morning and immediately senses that they have personal problems, he showed his care for them but also referred to God as the source of dreams and gave God the praise.

The two men had similar points in their dreams, the number three was a reference to the next three days, after which their situations would be changed, both would be lifted up but unfortunately for the baker, the phrase used had a double meaning, "within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee," Egyptians did not use hanging, they instead cut off the person's head, often putting it on a post, so the baker's head was to be "lifted up." while the butler was restored back into his position as the Pharaoh's wine cupbearer.

After the interpretation for the butler came true, Joseph asked *"I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: "* but that was not to happen, *"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."* The time was not right, according to the Lord.

Divine revelation

[Genesis 41:1-45](#)

Two years now pass, Joseph is still in the prison awaiting for God to move. Thirteen years have passed, Joseph's faith had been well tested, now the time is right for the next steps in the plan of God.

God caused the Pharaoh to have two very vivid but puzzling dreams in the same night. Pharaoh calls for his magicians but none of the "Egyptian experts" could explain the meaning of the dreams, God was hiding the true meaning from them. God now reminded the butler of Joseph and his ability to really understand dreams, he had personally seen the interpretation come true, so told Pharaoh of Joseph's abilities.

The Pharaoh summons Joseph from the prison. Joseph would need some preparation to come before Pharaoh, a wash, a change of clothes, to shave off his beard as the Egyptians did not like beards.

Joseph, from the beginning, gives God the honour in his interpretation, these dreams were very serious messages from God who was telling the Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, the events that were about to happen

during the next fourteen years and at the time make arrangements to protect His people. God puts the realization in to the mind of Pharaoh that he was hearing the truth as Joseph explains the meaning of the dreams and the future, Joseph also makes suggestions on what the Pharaoh should do, a very dangerous action by Joseph but God was fully in control of the situation, Pharaoh accepts the suggestions. First the Pharaoh must appoint a man who is wise and intelligent to oversee the land and the coming harvests, secondly give him the power and authority to collect one-fifth of each harvest for the next seven years, finally create a suitable place of storage for these harvests.

God moved the Pharaoh to choose Joseph.

[Genesis 41:38-57](#)

The attitude of Joseph, his abilities to explain the meaning of dreams and the wisdom in finding the solution for the coming events and famine impressed Pharaoh and he knew that Joseph was the right person for the job. Pharaoh gives him a robe of great significance to the Egyptians. Joseph once he had a special robe but hatred of his brothers took it from him. The ring and gold chain were symbols of Joseph's position and authority, he was now second in command in Egypt.

Had Joseph appreciated that the local nations, including his family were about to be exposed to the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine? Did he realize that his family might come to Egypt seeking food? If they did he was in a position of great power and could punish them for what they had done to him and their father. The comment in [Genesis 50:20,21](#)

Tells us that Joseph thoughts indicates that he knew and understood that God had meant all the suffering for him was for the good of His people.

I have often wondered what went through the mind of Potiphar's wife when she heard what had happened to the slave she lied about.

The Pharaoh also gave Joseph a new name, an Egyptian name, Zaphnathpaaneah, (the actual meaning is unknown though some students believe it has the meaning of "Saviour of the world" or "God like power of life and death.") Jesus was also given a new name,

[Revelation 19:12](#).

Joseph was also given his own personal chariot and the people were instructed to bow to Joseph, to respect Joseph just as they did to the Pharaoh. Finally Joseph was given an Egyptian wife,

[Genesis 41:45](#),

Not a Jewish bride but a gentile bride. She was the daughter of one of the priests of the sun god RA. We hope that Joseph taught her of the true God, the two sons born to this marriage, Manasseh, Ephraim became part of the Jewish nation.

Jesus has a bride - the church, the people, not the building, this is the people forgiven and washed in His blood.

[Ephesians 5:25-33](#),

And Jesus loves his bride.

The Jew who had been despised and rejected, was now enthroned over the nation of Egypt, a great and powerful nation at that time.

Jesus exalted, [1 Peter 3:22](#);

[Philippians 2:9-11](#).

All the Egyptians had to bow to Joseph, all the world will one day bow to Jesus,

[Romans 14:10,11](#),

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."

The seven plenteous years.

Joseph sets up the system to collect and store the surplus food during the "years of plenty". During this period he had two children,

[Genesis 41:51](#),

He named one "Manasseh" which means "one who causes to forget," for example his time of trial in Egypt,

[Genesis 41:52](#)

"Ephraim" which means "twice fruitful." Joseph now had two sons, but also he was saving many lives by his faith in God, his times of trial were as a result of the need of the True God as part of His plan to protect His people.

It is so sad that people remember for the rest of their life the sad and painful things that were done to them by others, their bitterness robs them of peace and joy,

Consider [Ephesians 4:20-32](#);

[Colossians 3:1-17](#).

The dreams that Pharaoh had been given proved accurate, Egypt had seven years of good harvests, a fifth of which was stored in the Pharaoh's storage cities, then the famine came, not just to Egypt but the Middle East area. In Egypt Joseph provided the food for the Egyptian people, but this information soon spread across the other nations suffering from famine and people came to get help and food.

[Genesis 41:55-57](#).

Joseph was the only hope for the dying world. verse 55, Famine - people told "go to Joseph," He supplied all they needed. Did Joseph wonder if his family would also come?

So the world is coming to Egypt for food., to the despised Jew, who is their only hope for life.

[Genesis 41:44](#).

As a result of Joseph selling the stored grain there was great riches for Pharaoh.

[Acts 4:12](#): Jesus is the only hope for the world.

A Time of testing for the brothers.

[Genesis 42:1-24](#).

The story starts with Jacob's sons sitting around, helpless, instead of trying to find grain (corn) to eat. Jacob instructs the ten brothers to go to Egypt to try to get food but he refused to send Benjamin, the brother of Joseph, and who had been born since the disappearance of Joseph and his apparent "death." s Jacob did not want to also lose the second son of Rachel who had taken Joseph's place in his father's affection.

God had sent Joseph ahead to preserve His people so that one day the nation of Israel would present the Saviour, Jesus, to the world, "the bread of life,"

[John 6:48](#),

So now the next stage of the plan takes place.

Why did Joseph not immediately reveal himself to his brothers? It was because God knew that the brothers needed to have a sincere repentance, to confess their sins and humble themselves, to admit their evil actions to Joseph and their father. The patience of Joseph eventually revealed the hearts of the brothers and allowed true repentance.

The trip to Egypt for the brothers was long, a distance of about 250-300 miles and the journey would make serious threats to the brothers, they would be carrying money on the way out and in an area under famine a considerable quantity of grain on the way back. In addition they were not certain if they would be allowed to purchase food from Egypt, as foreigners from the land of Canaan they could be considered spies and risk prison.

It is possible that the brothers were getting a conscience of what they had done to Joseph when they had sold him as a slave thirty years earlier, the brothers believed he was dead but the past can often cause fear and problems to some people.

Jacob now makes the decision that they are to go but not to take Benjamin. Perhaps Jacob had a suspicion of what his sons had really done to Joseph, Benjamin was the only reminder he had of his beloved Rachel.

Remember Jacob does not seem to realize that God was in control, The Lord wanted Jacob and his family to move to Egypt and He was prepared to use any situation to complete His plans.

The brothers in Egypt for the first time.

[Genesis 42:1ff](#).

Joseph, as the second ruler in the Egyptian nation, would not normally deal with each food sale, he had appointed stewards to deal with this task, but God may have revealed to him that his family were on the way and so he was watching all the foreign visitors seeking food. Any foreigners would be checked out thoroughly incase they were spies and part of a planned invasion, for Egypt had plenty of food at this time and would be attractive to attack by another nation. God must have arranged for Joseph to be present when the brothers arrived. Joseph recognized and knew the ten men as soon as they appeared, they would not recognize Joseph, he was seventeen when they sold him, twenty years have passed and to them Joseph was dead, in addition this ruler was clean shaven and dressed as an Egyptian and he only spoke in Egyptian, using an interpreter to speak to the brothers.

When the ten came into his presences and "*bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth,*" verse 6. Joseph knew that God was bringing the dream promises to fulfillment. It must have been difficult for him to control his emotions as he faced them, speaking through an interpreter, even though he knew their Hebrew language. Joseph knew that the brothers had to face their sinful acts and confess, they needed time to realize their wrong actions.

After a few minutes inspection Joseph accused them of being spies, he made the accusation four times, [Genesis 42:9,12,14,16](#),

Each time they reply "We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are not spies." Their words "we are true men," must have made Joseph wonder a little about their real attitude now. Joseph could not show any emotion but he was over joyed to hear that his father was still alive and that he had a younger brother.

Joseph decided to start teaching them a lesson and puts them in prison or under house arrest for three days, let them know what it was like for him, though they were not treated as he was, under guard and confined to a cell for years. After the three days he initially demanded that one of them go and fetch Benjamin to prove that they are not lying, Joseph was insisting that they proved that they were honest men and not spies.

The brothers talked amongst themselves, they were beginning to feel "guilty concerning their treatment of their brother," not realizing that Joseph understood their language and knew all what was said by them, Joseph also noted that Reuben had tried to stop them. Reuben has now realized that divine judgement was about to come on them for their behaviour with Joseph those many years before, verse 22. Joseph then commanded through the interpreter that only one of you, choosing Simeon, to remain in prison while the other nine can take your food home. Joseph knew they desperately needed the food, hence this action, but at the same time he had the promise of God that eventually all eleven brothers would bow to him, they had to have some feeling, some love for Simeon to return with Benjamin as proof.

Joseph could not suppress his emotions at this point and so leaves the room to weep privately.

Reuben was the oldest so why did Joseph not insist that he was the hostage? Perhaps because of Reuben's attempt to protect him, in addition Simeon was known to be a cruel man,

[Genesis 34:25](#);

[Genesis 49:5](#).

After binding Simeon the other brothers were given the corn they paid for and departed.

A Problem.

[Genesis 42:25-35](#).

At the instruction of Joseph the grain stewards were told to return the brothers money and place it in to their sacks, but in ,

[Genesis 43:23](#)

The steward said that he had been paid in full, did Joseph pay for the grain to care for his family?

On the way home one of the brothers opened his sack of corn to feed his animals and discovered the money, we are not told that the other brothers searched their sacks but that was what they told the steward on their second visit,

[Genesis 43:21](#).

They realized that the Egyptian ruler would have another charge against them, in addition it seems that they looked upon these events as a judgment from heaven. Therefore we have to ask, why were they apparently so frightened when they reached home and emptied their sacks of grain,

[Genesis 42:35](#).

It is possible that they may have been silent about the money discovery during the inn resting-place, for their father might have blamed them for not instantly returning? It is more possible that the steward had placed the money in the other sacks before filling with grain and so they had not seen it until the sacks were emptied. Whatever happened the brothers were very frightened. "*What is this that God hath done unto us?*" they knew that they were innocent but what would happen if they went back? Their lives would be in great danger if the Egyptian ruler did not believe them.

What have you done?

The brothers now report to their father what had happened, this only made him feel worse when he heard that Simeon had been imprisoned and Benjamin was involved in the future actions, the news should have

made Jacob and his sons look to the Lord for an explanation, to pray for His help and guidance, but they did not. However, God was still at work and in control.

Jacob seems to have suspected that his sons were involved and behind the loss of Joseph, "Me have ye bereaved," but the true believer knows what God has promised in,

[Romans 8:28](#),

"everything is for good to the children of God."

We now see Jacob's true relationship with his family, the ten brothers had made a dangerous trip to Egypt for the family yet Jacob expressed more love for Joseph and Benjamin.

- Was it their fault that the Egyptian asked so many personal questions, then arrested Simeon?
- They did not steal the money, why did their father not understand?
- Jacob was very depressed by the loss of Joseph, now he has lost Simeon and possibly risk to Benjamin, yet there is no sign that he consider his relationship with his other sons, "what ever happens Benjamin must be protected even if Simeon is lost and the family dies of famine."

Reuben tries to help by making a suggesting, but unfortunately he had not been in Jacob's favour for some time,

[Genesis 35:22](#),

And was ignored because Benjamin's safety was threatened.

Reuben should have thought carefully about his suggestion, what right did he have to offer his son's lives as compensation for Benjamin being killed? What affect would that have on Reuben's family and how can the death of two innocent young boys replace the loss of Jacob's favourite's.

No more food.

[Genesis 43:1-10](#).

Weeks now pass, slowly the food is eaten, but no one dare suggest a second trip to Egypt. Jacob just does not seem to see reality, soon death by starvation would come to the family.

Eventually the level of food supplies were desperate and Jacob had to be reminded by Reuben, no proof that they had a younger brother and were not spies, then no more food, Benjamin has to come with them.

Jacob responds, still feeling very sorry for himself *"Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? verse 6 "*

Judah ignores Jacob's response and offers to be guarantee for the safe return of Benjamin. It appears that Judah is getting some sort of conscience over the previous events and it was starting to make changes in his heart. Though Jacob had once a very close relationship with God he still does not turn to Him, he is still putting his trust in fate *"If it must be so now, do this; ... If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."*

Jacob is still the one in control and issues instructions to his sons, "take a present for the Egyptian ruler, twice the money they had found in their sacks, for the past food and to purchase the food." Finally he said "take also your brother," verse 13, "not my beloved son." Was he at last realizing they were a family and reminding the sons of their relationship. Finally Jacob involved God, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man." Yet there is still appears to be little faith in God, *"If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."*

The second visit to Egypt.

[Genesis 43:11-39](#).

Jacob is still trying to be in control, he issues instructions to the brothers, they were told exactly what to do, the presents and twice the money to give to the Egyptian ruler and so get release of Simeon. (The presents consisted of things thought not to be available or produced in Egypt,

(see [Genesis 37:25](#)).

The "honey" was not honey made by bees' but a thick syrup boiled down from fresh grape juice. The nuts are thought to be pistachios.)

Verse 13 is of interest, Jacob said "take your brother" indicating that he was now considering that Benjamin was not the only son in his family.

Jacob sends the brothers off with his blessing, asking for God to protect them and change the heart of the Egyptian, but the end of verse 14, does not show much faith in God being in control.

It is possible that Joseph had issued instruction to his servants to watch for the return of the brothers, because on their arrival they are taken to his house, obviously the brothers were very scared by this action, "were they about to be arrested? Someone must have known about the money." So they looked for guidance

and turn to the steward, to try to convince him that they were innocent. However, they must have been very surprised when they realized that the steward knows all about the money and previous events, and responds "Do not fear." Joseph had obviously seen that Benjamin was with them and issued the necessary instructions to his steward so the steward then brings Simeon from prison to the brothers.

We have to ask "did Simeon benefit in any way from his months in prison?" When Jacob was approaching his death bed,

[Genesis 49:5-7](#),

His words suggests that Simeon's attitude to others had still not changed.

The brothers must have been amazed at the treatment they were receiving, "why was this happening?" When Joseph arrives they bowed and presented their gifts, responding to his questions about their father, "*And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance*" in fulfilment of the dreams many years before.

Joseph sees his brother and becomes emotional, needing to leave the room to cover up his tears, it is amazing that his love for God and his family had not been replaced by hatred or that he had turned to the idol worship of the Egyptian nation, rejecting the true God.

[Genesis 43:30](#),

The "bowels" were considered the center of emotions; today we would say "heart." On Joseph's return the meal starts but Egyptians will not eat with Hebrews "*for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.*" Joseph did not violate this custom.

Consider [Genesis 46:34](#).

As the meal proceeds Joseph sends special plates of food down to the brothers, making sure that Benjamin received five times more than the others. Joseph's deliberate favoring of Benjamin was probably another test to see if his brothers were still jealous of Benjamin.

The brothers realized that the Egyptian ruler had taken a liking to Benjamin but instead of being worried for Benjamin's safety, they relax.

Why not? Simeon was released, to them Benjamin did not seem to be in any danger, they were being well looked after, so "they drank, and were merry with him." But God was not finished with the brothers, they still had not admitted their sins against Joseph or Jacob, neither were they seeking forgiveness, they still had left God out of their lives. Consider the words of Jesus in,

[Luke 12:16-21](#).

The consequences of the brothers actions catches them up.

[Genesis 44:1-](#)

The brothers have carefully hidden and covered the terrible sins concerning Joseph, so far they seem to have got away with it, but

[Numbers 32:23](#),

Reminds us that "*you will be sinning against God; you can be sure that your sin will track you down,*" so our sins will eventually reveal their consequences. Twenty-two years have passed since the brothers dreadful sins, they were not afraid of any consequences as Joseph was the only witness of their actions, and he was dead, or so they thought, but God was in full control and not only knew of their sins but was about to climax His plans.

Joseph now sets the next stage, he instructs his steward to fill the brothers food sacks with the food, then place all the money on top of the food, and finally to put his silver chalice (cup) on the top of the food in Benjamin's sack. Next morning the brothers set off for home, after a few hours Joseph sends his steward after the brothers, to charge them with stealing the money and the special chalice (cup).

When the steward catches up with them the brothers deny the charge and made the following statement, "We would never do anything like that! Why, the money we found in our bags earlier, we brought it back all the way from Canaan - do you think we'd turn right around and steal it back from your master? If that chalice is found on any of us, he'll die; and the rest of us will be your master's slaves."

Can you imagine their reaction and thoughts as the sacks were opened and the money is revealed and then the silver cup is found in Benjamin's sack. "*They ripped their clothes in despair, loaded up their donkeys, and went back to the city.*"

- How are they to prove that they are innocent?
- Did Benjamin take advantage of the Egyptian's friendship and steal the cup?
- How did the money get into the sacks?

They appear to all be thieves. How stupid were they to make the offer of becoming slaves.

[\(Genesis 44:5\)](#)

It is unlikely that Joseph used the cup for divination, it is more likely that this statement was made in order to attach special significance to the cup).

Joseph was waiting for them and they throw themselves down before him, Joseph has been waiting for the dream to be completed, they not only bowing but they were now prostrating themselves on the ground in submission before him.

Judah now becomes the spokesman for the brothers, his statement is not only referring to the grain money and the silver cup but also to the hidden sins of their past. Judah does not try to defend himself and his brothers, he admits the hand of God is at work, "God is behind this, exposing how bad we are." He feels that he must explain why God was against them, he talks about the events of the previous years, how they hated their brother Joseph and that it was Judah who suggested selling their brother Joseph into slavery,

[Genesis 37:26,27](#)

Joseph can see their reaction to their past sins so now wants to find their attitude and relationship with the younger Benjamin, did they hate him like Joseph, so he announces that Benjamin will remain as a slave in Egypt, but they can return home. Joseph has arranged this situation in order to test his brothers. Would they respond and use this opportunity to get rid of Benjamin, or had their hearts been changed so that they would stand up for him?

Judah now comes to the defense of Benjamin in a very long and moving speech, often referring to their father and the effects of this situation would have upon him if they returned home without Benjamin. Judah reminds Joseph that Benjamin was present because Joseph had required him to come, without him they would not have been given any more food. Perhaps Judah was hoping that this Egyptian, as a father himself, would understand the effect on their father because of the loss of his two sons, Jacob would die.

As a final appeal Judah, offered, almost begged, to take Benjamin's place as a slave, he knew how he was involved in the loss of Joseph and the effect it had on his father Jacob. It is very obvious that Judah has great concern for his father Jacob and brother Benjamin. Joseph could see a very different Judah, a man who could be trusted. It was now time to reveal who he was to his brothers.

Joseph reveals himself.

[Genesis 45:1ff](#)

Joseph is very emotional, the brothers must have been concerned as he sends away all the Egyptian staff. Now alone with his family Joseph is weeping. Up to now Joseph had been using the Egyptian language to talk to the brothers through an interpreter, but now he wanted no Egyptian to know what he was about to say, he wanted to be alone with his brothers.

Joseph spoke in Hebrew to his brothers: "I am Joseph. Is my father really still alive?" The brothers were speechless.

How did this Egyptian speak their language? How did he know of Joseph? Why is he claiming that he is Joseph, he is dead? Then the realization came to them, if he really was Joseph then what was going to happen to them? They could not believe what was happening. The brothers are very dismayed, terrified when they realized that he was Joseph. Did God remind them of the dreams, we are not told. The Bible record tells us that the brothers were concerned for their safety for many years,

[Genesis 50:15.](#)

"Come near to me, I pray you." said Joseph, this should have made them relax a little as Egyptians would not come close to Hebrews,

[Genesis 43:32.](#)

They had to respond, they could have run in panic but the weeping of Joseph was not normal for a person in Joseph's position, in addition he had said, "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." The brothers secret was revealed.

Jesus is saying "come to me," on the cross, many thought that this was the greatest failure for him but it was the greatest success, love and a way back to God.

Joseph could see the concern on the faces of his brothers, but he was full of love for them and had a forgiving heart. They had sinned but God was in control and had worked out the evil in the brothers hearts for good, see also the words of Joseph in,

[Genesis 50:20;](#)

[Romans 8:28.](#) Joseph gave clear testimony to God's planning and control of his life, God had used the

situation to His glory, sending Joseph to Egypt for the future protection of His chosen people. Without realizing it the brothers had helped God fulfill His covenant with Abraham,

[Genesis 12:1-3](#),

And so the future Saviour of the world.

The Family is relocated.

[Genesis 45:6-28](#).

"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Joseph and the brothers talked together, once Joseph was hated and they would not speak to him, now all reconciled and forgiven.

Why should his family live in Canaan and suffer the famine for a further five years with the possible danger of a regular journey to Egypt for the food. So Joseph embraced his brothers, especially Benjamin and instructed his brothers to hurry home and tell their father the good news, then they are to pack and come to Egypt to live in the fertile land of Goshen, and he would provide and protect them. (The land of Goshen was the eastern section of the Nile delta.)

Pharaoh, on hearing the good news, encourage all the plans of Joseph for his family, this Joseph had saved Egypt and he wanted to thank him and give a royal welcome to Joseph's family. It is possible that Joseph had previously informed Pharaoh of what was about to happen and the plan has been approved by Pharaoh. Remember that for the plans of God to be fulfilled Joseph had suffered considerable hardship, but he had triumphed in the end, a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus, his rejection, his terrible death on the cross, but resurrection and glory all for sinners, the people of God.

The Gifts.

[Genesis 45:22,23](#).

The brothers had stolen the coat of many colours from Joseph, now he gave each of them new clothes to wear. Joseph had been sold for twenty pieces of silver but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of clothes. Joseph also realized that the sixty-five members of the family would need extra food and animals to pull the carts for the return journey to Egypt.

One final word from Joseph in,

[Genesis 45:24](#),

"See that ye fall not out by the way" means "Don't quarrel among yourselves on the trip." He knew his brothers.

The joy of Jacob.

[Genesis 45:25-28](#).

Jacob cannot believe what he is told, he is happy to see Benjamin but he was not prepared for the news of Joseph being alive and second ruler of Egypt. "And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." But the gifts and the carts etc. proved it. He was going to have all of his family round him.

[Genesis 46:2-4](#).

Jacob builds an altar and offers worship to the Lord who also assured Jacob in a dream that he was doing the right thing by going to Egypt. It was in Egypt that the Lord would make the Jewish nation appear, from a tribal group into a great nation.

Jacob was 130 years old when he travelled down to Egypt and he died when he was 147, he had seventeen years with his whole family, including the two additional grandchildren of Joseph.

The brothers must have told Jacob of their terrible action on Joseph and asked him for forgiveness, it is very possible that Jacob had been suspicious all along for on his death bed he told the brothers some truths about themselves,

[Genesis 49:1ff](#).

Take the message.

The brothers are told to go and tell the father and family. Jacob did not believe until he saw the evidence.

[Genesis 45:26](#).

The message. The ones who rejected Joseph were now his messengers.

It is amazing how God has shown a portrait of Jesus in Joseph, "Come to me then tell the world, "I am exalted."

We helped nail Christ to the cross, who now offers us forgiveness.

"Thank you Jesus for dieing for me." "Save me Jesus" thank him in faith and accept the gift.