

**EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



**Lives of Faith**

**JOSEPH**

**Humility Lifted Up in God's  
Time**

**GENESIS 37 - 50**

by

**DR JOHN McEWAN**

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**Hebrews 11:22** *"22. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As we start this chapter, please pause here and read the following verses. Proverbs 23:7, Galatians 5:16-23. In this chapter we have a person who is failing on a regular basis, because their daily walk through this world is dominated by their Old Sin Nature weaknesses, rather than the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. Moses is very direct with his language – try not to be offended at his bluntness, but sin must be confronted and plain speaking saves lives. Judah thinks of sex all the time, and takes opportunities for it when-ever he finds them. As he thinks, so he has become. He is just like his father and grand-father before him; dominated by his Old Sin Nature, rather than regularly controlled by God's Holy Spirit.

As Isaac had left Jacob and Esau to bring themselves up, so Jacob also had failed to be a good father and role model to his sons. His lack of control over the family led to great problems amongst the brothers, but his lack of sexual self control produced a harvest of evil in the life of Judah. Moses tells this sordid story to illustrate the dangers of sexual sins and the level to which good men fall if they fail to follow through in obedience to God's prohibitions, and if they fail to walk in daily fellowship with the Lord through prayer. The fruit of a godly life walk is godliness, but to follow the Old Sin Nature is death and judgment in this life and loss of eternal rewards in the life to come. Galatians 5:16-26.

Let us recap the story of Jacob so far. Jacob was very cunning in Haran, and Moses records in chapter 31, that and by selective breeding he was able to legally become rich in cattle, goats, and sheep. Although Jacob was a tricky character, he was looked after by God as he has been saved by grace through faith, and like ourselves, he received God's love without earning it. Jacob is the reminder to us, that not all believers are nice people, nor are they straight in their business dealings; Jacob was not a man you would want to do business with unless you wanted to be taken advantage of!

In chapters 32 and 33 Moses records how he meets Esau again, who even though an unbeliever, is a far nicer and apparently nobler character than his believing brother. Jacob however prays a great prayer in Genesis 32:9-12, and came back to the Lord under the threat of death. Jacob does become spiritual but only at times, and so the great majority of his early life (the first 100 years!) is an unfolding disaster of carnality. The times he repents and builds an altar are times of rich blessing, and in these times he gives enough doctrine to his sons that they are bound to learn a little, and this is what will lead them to the place where Joseph can deliver them all.

Chapter 34 is a very sad and sordid section in the history of the patriarchs. Jacob is not only polygamous but also has failed to warn his children against the sexual immorality of the pagans amongst whom they live. This failure to warn against sin comes back to haunt him in what happens to his children. Firstly his daughter Dinah goes off with the local girls and is seduced by one of the princes of Shechem. It is clear from the Hebrew that she was seduced rather than raped. The sons take a terrible vengeance on the men of Shechem by taking the law into their own hands and killing every man in Shechem. Jacob has no control over them at the point where he should have exercised leadership, which is a terrible indictment on how far he has slipped from the proper standards.

In verse 1 of chapter 35, Moses records that God says to Jacob to come back to Bethel and dwell with Him in spiritual fellowship again. This is the same place that he saw the vision of Jacob's ladder. Jacob was like what some today call "a crisis Christian", who keeps on living like a pagan until they have a crisis in their life. Some Christians have to have a catastrophe in their lives before they seek God's face. Jacob is like this, and so the Lord God orders him to build an altar; this is the Lord's command to get back into fellowship and deal with his sins. 2 Corinthians 13:5 - examine yourself, 1 John 1:9 – confess your sins, Hebrews 12:1 – 3 - walk with the Lord and look to Him alone for guidance in all things.

The spiritual vacuum that Jacob has left in the family has been filled by false religion, and Jacob now sees that he has to do something about it. He tells the entire household to clean out the strange gods from their bed rooms and clean their garments. Remember, as we saw in this section, and as we see around us in the world, if the parents do not set the example of godliness the children will pick up ungodliness from the people they come into contact with. The sons of Jacob gave him the gods and ear rings. Ear rings were involved with paganism and worship of the pagan gods. They changed their clothes, sacrifices and prayers were offered at the altar, and they had a family revival, but sadly, like all revivals, it is brief. [ chapter 35, verse 4] The need for the church is regular and powerful revivals!

A revival occurs when a believer deals with sin in their life under the authority of God, and so cleans up their family witness. The blessing of God on Jacob is shown by a new name, Israel which means "prince of God" or "God will rule". God sees how we will be under the power of the Holy Spirit, and deals with him according to his potential, rather than according to his sins. He treats us all the same way; we are dealt with in grace, which we should be very thankful for. God deals with us by giving us the things that will enable us to walk before him.

In Chapter 35 verses 11-13, Moses recorded that God tells him that he is a true physical and spiritual descendant of Abraham, and will inherit the promise to Abraham. We have noted above that for the rest of the Bible he is either called Jacob or Israel. He is Israel when walking in spirituality, and that is best expressed with continual revival of the spirit.

When he is called Jacob it is a clue that he is under the control of his Old Sin Nature whilst when he is under the power of the Holy Spirit he is called Israel. The choice is ours, exactly as it was Jacob's, every moment of every day we decide which way we will go through this world, as we deal with, or fail to deal with, the tendency to sin in our life. We will

illustrate in our own life, just as Jacob did, what God's rulership will do with us, or what the Old Sin Nature's control will create. Refer to the BTB study of SIN – OLD SIN NATURE.

The weakness in Jacob is seen in verses 21-22 of Genesis 35, in the fact that he was over indulgent with his family, and played favorites, especially Joseph, but he also fails to take actions against clear examples of sinfulness in his family. Jacob has a concubine Bilhah, and Reuben goes in and has sexual relations with her. He is following his father, and old Jacob knows it. For years the boys have seen their father go into his four "wives" and have sex with them, and so there is no surprise that some of them centre their lives around sex also. Jacob does nothing about this evil as he is weak when it comes to facing the truth about his boy's behaviours.

However the story reminds us, that the Lord can overcome our weaknesses, as long as our heart desires it. Moses wants us to get the message strongly, that as pastors of the Lord's Flock, we should encourage our people to deal with sin. Jacob fails to do this and as a result he was afflicted with sadness to a level which very few others experience, the sadness of losing a son, in his case Joseph. All the judgment that comes upon him comes because he fails as a father and fails to live as a godly man ought to live. He ought to die under extreme discipline but God's grace keeps him, just as we are kept! To save people from misery, we as pastors must minister the Word of Truth, and announce the Lord's policy clearly and his warnings against sin strongly.

#### JOSEPH AND THE JEALOUSY OF HIS BROTHERS

Chapter 37 begins the story of Joseph, and Moses immediately identifies the key element of the story; Jacob's favouritism and his visible demonstration of it through the gift of the coat of many colours. This was not just a coat of many colours; it was a coloured long sleeved coat. In the ancient world most people did not have a wardrobe, they mainly had just one set of clothes and they wore them until they rotted off their back. If you were wealthy you had more than one set of clothes! While your clothes rotted away in use, you desperately tried to save for a new set of clothes.

To be given a set of clothes, especially coloured dyed ones, was to be given something of great value. In the Arab world even today a person's status in a tribe, and what tribe he belongs to, can be gauged from the traditional clothing he wears and the particular colour and pattern of the cloth.

The important thing about Joseph's coat was that it had colour and long sleeves. This was a sign that he had been placed in charge of the others! This sort of cloak has come down in the university today, where an undergraduate gown has no sleeves, a bachelors degree has sleeves which are short. If you get a master's degree you get a long sleeved gown. A doctoral gown has bright colours in panels on the front

By giving him a long sleeved coloured coat it meant that Joseph had been put in charge of his older brothers and this caused envy, bitterness, hatred and jealousy. Once again Jacob fails in leadership; he simply gives the coat without explanation or direction to the others; they simply one day see Joseph wearing the coat that means he is in charge of them! As Moses will also make clear here in this chapter, the reason for giving the coat wasn't the right one (ie Joseph's leadership ability) it was sheer favouritism without reference to Joseph's character and abilities!

Jacob had recognized the truth, in the sense that Joseph was the only one with intellectual powers and spiritual character, but he didn't act because of this, he just acted because he loved Joseph more than the others. He was wrong in all his actions here, but especially about the way he went about giving the coat to Joseph, because he showed blatant favouritism for his younger son without explanation, causing animosity in his elder sons.

Favouritism in the family is always the cause of bitterness and it can be fatal. All your children must be your favourite, even those who drive you crazy, and this means that all feel loved, and all are corrected when they go wrong. While Joseph was the only really natural and spiritual leader in the family, the way he was given leadership made it virtually impossible for him to lead the family.

Moses explains the path that leads to disaster, and yet also to deliverance. God will bring good out of evil, and salvation out of slavery. In this chapter we will see that Joseph has a dream that indicated that he had been set above his father and his brothers, and he foolishly tells them in a self important manner, and they did not like to hear this. He was quite right to share the Word of God with them, but was arrogant himself at this point, and not too considerate as to the effect of his words.

Joseph tells them about the dream and everyone gets angry. Envy gets hold of his brothers. Envy, like all other mental attitude sins, will destroy a man, family and church very quickly. As a man thinks in his heart so he is - Proverbs 23:7 - evil begins in the mind and God hates the mental attitude sins, for they lead to all others.

**Proverbs 6:16-19.** *"16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:  
17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,  
18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,  
19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."*

The brothers are out with the flocks and Jacob sends Joseph out to report on their activities. Joseph is his father's "eyes and ears", as he alone is fully honest of the boys, Jacob suspects the others are siphoning off money for themselves, just as he did with Laban. In this Jacob is right; his sons are as tricky as he was! Joseph goes to where they were supposed

to be and does not find them, as they have gone to Dotham, which was a place of two wells, a bigger place, far less hard work and better social fun, and the place to work their deals. His brothers are running away from work and responsibility and they will not be happy when their "tell all" brother arrives, especially when they see him wearing his cloak of authority over them.

When they saw Joseph a long way off they recognized him by his long coloured coat and said, "here comes that dreamer", and in their Old Sin Nature anger and jealousy, planned to kill him. Envy and hatred will always come out in greater evils. Reuben, the fornicator, is like the others, a believer but clearly less far out of fellowship at this point, and knows that it is evil that they plan, and says, let us not kill him but throw him into the pit. His intention was to buy time, but you don't ever buy time with evil, only open up greater possibilities for harm.

Reuben lacked the courage to say that the thing they were doing was evil. He had been compromised by his own sin. Reuben could well be called a hypocrite by his brothers. From this example there are many lessons for believers as to what they should not allow to happen in their lives. Reuben has good motives but does not have the character to follow it right through. His past sin has meant he has limited moral authority over the others, even though he is the oldest.

The hated symbol of favouritism and rulership, Joseph's coat, is taken off him straight away and they threw him into a well with no water in it. The fact that he was thrown into this deep hole by a group of angry men and did not get any bones broken is the first miracle of God looking after him.

If you are a victim of evil you can always claim the protection of the Lord. God always looks after you. The brothers had lunch from the things Joseph had brought, and looked up and there was a band of Ishmaelites coming along en route for Egypt. Judah suggests that they sell Joseph. We will note his logic here, "as he is our brother we should not kill him", but slavery is ok! What a perverted viewpoint! They sell him for 20 pieces of silver. This tells us that Joseph has become a bond slave; unable to make himself free again. He is totally powerless, and it is in this state that he will undergo God's educational program in jail in Egypt, and he will graduate to become second ruler of the greatest nation of his day.

The Ishmaelites were their cousins and by this point wild unbelievers but the action of believers such as Reuben and Judah are equally bad to these unbelievers, and so will be the actions of all believers when they are away from God. This evil act will cause them to be delivered in the future; God will however turn their evil to good. Romans 8:28. When Reuben finds Joseph gone, and it being too late to rescue him from the pit or the Ishmaelites, a plan is hatched to explain his disappearance to Jacob. A goat is killed and the blood is daubed on the coat to make it look as if he has been killed by a lion.

Had Reuben wanted to be moral and righteous he would have put his money on the line and gone and bought Joseph back, but he too is covering his sins of jealousy and hatred towards his own brother. They all then bring the coat to the father to tell him that Joseph is clearly dead. This is a shocking act that nearly kills the father with grief. However Jacob is suffering for his own sin, as is Isaac, who is still alive at this time.

The Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar, the officer in charge of the royal guard. Joseph is going to learn Romans 8:26-28 the hard way. The issue for all believers caught in such places of powerlessness is to learn that God is still sovereign, and it is to ensure that you are walking through the power of the Holy Spirit, even if you feel you are being tested above the level you can handle. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5, 1 Peter 5:7-9, 2 Peter 2:9. Joseph is going to have to go to jail before he has learnt these things properly. Romans 15:1-15. These are lessons that all who would serve the Lord in advanced and important places need to learn.

God can be trusted and He is in control of our lives. No matter what was happening in our life the Lord knew about it in eternity past and had a plan for it, and is going to work it through. Our job is to walk with Him, in His Holy Spirit power, and honour Him in all we do and say. If you are in the pit you put your hand in the hand of the man who died on the Cross for you and acknowledge that He is in control of your life. If you are in a pit today, then you say to the Lord, "When you are ready to pull me out of the pit it is up to you, but until then I will worship and serve you here in prayer and Bible study". Do you want to be like Joseph or like Jacob? Do you want to walk in the lusts of the Old Sin Nature or in the power of the Holy Spirit, as per Galatians 5:18-23?

**NOTES**

**CHAPTER 37****GENESIS 37:1-36**

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. 2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. 4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. 5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. 10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying. 12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. 14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. 15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. 17 And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. 18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. 20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. 21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. 22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. 23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; 24 And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. 26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. 28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. 29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. 30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? 31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; 32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. 33 And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard."

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1-4.** Joseph is now seventeen. He is out in the fields learning the role of the shepherd from his older brothers. Moses identifies the camp he is in; it is the camp of the concubine's children. Apparently the flocks and herds are divided, and Joseph is placed with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, rather than the sons of Leah. Once again Moses just gives us a glimpse of the division and distress between the boys of this household, but especially towards the sons of Rachel. The conflict between the women has gone to the children.

Joseph is honest, if a little foolish in his dealings, but he is young and can be excused for this. Moses gives us his age deliberately, to assist us in dating the event, but more to identify that these events occur while Joseph is beneath the age of accountability, as the Lord set it for the Exodus generation; at twenty years of age. This was the age when active military service began and when spiritual accountability was the issue for each person, and they were judged for rebellion. Exodus 30:14, 38:26, Numbers 1:1ff, 26:1-2, 32:11-15. Those below this age were still seen as "learners" and were not to be judged harshly, nor was too much to be expected of them.

Moses makes it also clear that Jacob's gift of the coloured long sleeved coat to Joseph was not for the right reasons. It was not a recognition of his abilities, his honesty towards his father's flocks, but simply because he loved him more than

the others! It was sheer favouritism. It was an action almost designed to produce hatred and envy on the part of the others, for it gave them the message that they were as nothing in his eyes.

Jacob's weakness was that he was self centred; he failed to appreciate the significance of his actions upon others in his family. He saw only his own perspective, never that of others. The great sadness of this, is that he did not see God's viewpoint most of the time, and only great sadness will teach him to look upwards. The Lord is patient with us, and he is very patient with Jacob, but if we fail to learn by direct means the Lord will teach us the vital lessons for his service through suffering.

**Verses 4-5.** Joseph appears to be oblivious to the hatred of the others towards him, and gets the silent treatment, or openly angry words. His father does not act to protect him, nor warn him, nor deal with the hatred of the others. Jacob believes that it will all work out in the end, and he relaxes and ignores all the problems that ought to be faced directly. Joseph reports to his father about the older boys business dealings and the report is unfavourable. It would appear that the older boys are guilty of the same sort of tricky dealings that Jacob himself had practiced.

Rather than warn his son Joseph about what his report means for his safety and security, Jacob simply sends him out again into the fields, but this time with the sign of his father's love upon his shoulders. It would not have been wise on Jacob's part to reward his son for his "spying" work in such a way, but it is even less wise to simply send him out with a mark of favouritism upon him. To add to this coat, Joseph receives a dream from the Lord, and he tells them all about it in a way that is not designed to "win friends and influence people".

Hatred of this sort is however very hard to deal with by the one who is hated; all he can do is cast himself upon the Lord. It is this that Joseph must learn to do. Sadly at this point he is as self centred and narcissistic as his father. Psalms 38:19, 69:4, John 15:18-21. The principle to recall is that of Romans 8:28, for both self-centred men do love the Lord, and in God's grace, not their deserving, they will be led to the right path for God's glory in His Plan. They will learn!

**Verses 6 – 8.** It was not only the dreams that Joseph dreamed that made him hated, it was his words also, that may have been arrogant, or at least came across that way. Moses has told us his age that we might not be too critical of him, and that is to be remembered as we go through this study. Joseph makes some miscalculations here but he should be safe, for his father ought to have been his mentor, and his brothers ought to have taken him in hand and taught him also. All the older men fail Joseph and so he tells them what he sees and speculates about their possible meaning. Once he has told this first dream the oldest man ought to have called a prayer meeting at the family altar, and laid this all before the Lord, as it is a warning for them all. Prophetic words are never "happy-clappy" events; they are warnings and calls to solemn and persistent prayer, for each person to seek the Lord's path through the fulfilment of the prophetic revelation.

When the Lord breaks into a situation with a prophetic word or dream, it is not normally a reason to leap about for joy; it is a warning! If the Lord has ordinary things to say, then he speaks into our hearts in ordinary ways through the Word and the Spirit. If there is a prophetic word or dream however, then a crisis of some sort is coming and prayerfulness is the order of the day! No-one in the camp sees the importance of Joseph's dream revelation here and none sit up and ask what is going to happen. A great famine is coming, and while it is still far off, the Lord is speaking into this family, but only Joseph is listening, and he can't understand without help. Jacob fails his son yet again.

**Verses 9 – 11.** Just in case you think I am being a little harsh upon Jacob, Moses makes it clear to us regarding the second dream that he specifically tells Jacob this dream, and the indication is that he has heard about the first one also. Joseph speaks with youthful enthusiasm, and is impressed that the dream may mean that he will rule over them all, but even though he has said this aloud (not wise – it's possible meaning ought to have been discussed with his father alone in private), the oldest man has the responsibility to correct, instruct, or lead his son. He also should have gone to the family altar and called a family prayer meeting.

The two dreams may now be compared and their true meaning seen. The first is agricultural and speaks of the harvest in the fields. What is going to happen is going to happen to the food in the fields, and the rulership of Joseph centres in his rulership over the fields; he controls the harvest, he rules over the fields and all the other brothers must bow to his leadership for their food. They will starve without his provision.

The second dream involves both his father and mother (sun and moon) and his eleven brothers (11 stars), and all bow to his star. The stars were the acknowledged symbol of rulership, but even more of Joseph's destiny as a ruler of men in the plan of God. This meaning is clearly seen by Jacob. He does know what this means, but is offended at Joseph, as if he is an upstart and has invented the dream. James 3:14-18, 4:6-8. He doesn't call that vital prayer meeting!

The two witnesses (dreams) have come unbidden by Joseph, and he has told their contents without any guile. It is his father's place to interpret them as the priest of the family, not rebuke his son for having a dream he couldn't control. Notice Jacob's attitude. As his father he rebukes Joseph, but then thought about the dream, knew it was significant, but still took no action. There are two types of sin; acts of commission and acts of omission. Jacob fails to act, where action was required, and his sin will lead to disaster, and yet also to deliverance for them all. Just as shipwreck for the apostle Paul leads to the Gospel message arriving in Malta, Acts 27:23-26, 28:1-11, just so, the slavery of Joseph leads to the deliverance for his entire extended family. God will work all things together for good to all those who love Him and are called according to his purposes for their life, even when they mess things up and fail to do what is required at the time.

**Verses 12 – 14.** Joseph is sent out to spy on the other boys at Shechem. They are grazing stock where they once murdered all the men. It is not a good place with good associations for these boys and they will think of murder again before the sun sets on Joseph's arrival further down the road at Dothan. Joseph is sent out by Israel to check on the others, and this is a very unwise thing, but old Israel ignores facts and hopes all will be well over time. Many believers fall into Israel's sinful and stupid behaviour pattern; they believe all will work out and God will look after them and those of value to them. While this is true in the end, tragedy may occur, and we are challenged by Moses to see that wishful thinking is not biblical – prayerful actions with good instructions is biblical and the path to greatest blessing with joy.

I have seen believing parents leave their precious children with adults they do not fully know! I have seen parents of children let them wander off with unbelievers and wonder why God "let them down" when their children were abused! God expects us to exercise control over our children and give guidance and leadership, not practice the denial that Israel does. Note that Moses does however call him Israel here, not Jacob, and that is an indication that he is operating in the plan of God, but it will bring great pain to Jacob and himself in the years to follow. As he waves goodbye to his beloved son he does not know that he will not see him again for as many years as he was away in Haran.

**Verses 15 – 17.** Joseph arrives at the area of Shechem, and it is a deserted place; no sign of flocks, herds or his brothers. It is an eerie place after the massacre and so he will be perplexed as he rides about trying to find any sign of where the brothers may have gone. A man finds him in the fields and ask him who he is looking for. This man has been in the vicinity for a while and has clearly been a part of the camp of the brothers, for he has overheard their discussion and their intended destination.

Pause and reflect upon this, for the security of flocks and herds depended on their movements and intentions being secret. The brothers are careless, in that this stranger knows their business, and that they are heading for Dothan. Their reasons are not related to the availability of fodder, for this other man is still there feeding his flock or herd, but Dothan has the night life and is away from ghosts!

Shechem is a ghost town after their murders there, so they seek a more pleasant place away from past realities they would rather not face. They are not focused upon their charge from Israel, but upon feeling good and being away from reminders of their sin. Perhaps Israel sent them there to remind them of their sin and make them more amenable to their brother? Joseph now heads down the road for Dothan and a date with destiny.

**Verses 18 – 22.** To be conspired against is not a bad sign, for it has happened to our Lord himself, so the hatred of the brothers for Joseph does not reflect upon him, but rather upon them. John 15:18-21. David also was hated and conspired against by evil men at many times. Notice the attacks upon David and his confidence in the Lord, for this is the confidence that Joseph needs to learn. Psalms 31:11-16, 37:12-17, 94:21-23, 109:1-7. Joseph will learn, as David did many years later, that hatred can be turned to blessing in the Lord's economy, and he will eliminate all arrogance.

Their plans call for his murder and they plan to do it straight away. The real danger is immediate and must be stopped, and Reuben plays for time by urging that they do no murder, but just throw him in a pit and wait. This is a deliverance for Joseph but still it is a foolish thing, for how will they explain any of this to their father? Murderous thoughts lack logic and so playing for time he hopes will be useful, as Reuben hopes they will come to their senses, but their hatred runs deeper than even he realizes. His plan is to deliver him back to their father and then try to get Jacob to deal with the problems his inaction has created. Jacob will pay dearly for his denial and inaction, as David does with Absalom!

**Verses 23 – 25.** Joseph rides into their camp without realizing the discussion that has been just held. He lands on the ground amongst them and is immediately set upon, stripped of his coat, that hated badge of their subjection to him, and cast into a cistern, or dry well. As he sits there baffled and shocked and bruised, they calmly have lunch. Proverbs 30:20. This calmness after great evil is the sign that their hearts are hardened against Joseph, and the Lord will send famine to them for many years to soften their hearts and their stomachs!

As they are eating they see a band of Ishmaelites coming on a caravan of camels heading for Egypt with spices to sell there. Judah develops a quick plan to get rid of Joseph without killing him and also making a bit of pocket money to spend at the same time. Reuben must not have been with them at this time, for he is not in on this plot, and perhaps they move quickly to thwart Reuben's plan to rescue Joseph. Where was Reuben? We are not told, but given they have responsibility over many herds, he may have been urgently called away to deal with a problem, for he arrives back too late to deliver Joseph from the cistern later that night as he had planned to.

**Verses 26 – 30.** Judah will later be formally made the leader of the brothers in replacement of Reuben. Genesis 49:8-12. At this point however, he is still filled with Old Sin Nature anger and resentment against young Joseph. He may be trying to save them all from more murders, but his suggestion indicates that he himself still wants rid of Joseph. It is also a reminder that some of the others are still "killing mad" at this point, and only Judah's suggestion saves Joseph's life.

As they eat their lunch the discussion is clearly a violent one towards Joseph, and they are only pacified by the money they can make by selling him. It is money that will be used again to buy their lunch from Joseph later, and it will be hidden money that will cause them pain later. The Lord ensures that the wheel turns full circle on these men and they pay back in full the price of their unfaced sins at this point. None take spiritual leadership in this situation and call for godliness or prayer.

The Ishmaelites are from the land of Midian, and so Moses, who will spend many years there himself mentions that fact. The “money” is not stamped money as we know it, but weighed pieces of either silver or gold. Stamped Coinage would only begin in the West with King Croesus of Lydia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The price for Joseph is twenty pieces of silver. Just as the Lord will later be sold for thirty pieces of Silver. Zechariah 11:12-13, Matthew 26:15, 27:9.

Reuben returns from his errand somewhere out amongst the flocks and discovers that Joseph is gone and his comment indicates that he has disclosed his plan to at least one of the others, for aloud he exclaims, “where will I go?”, or in other words, “what will become of me?” His comment tells us that old Israel may have placed Joseph’s safety under Reuben’s care; possibly another reason why he will lose permanently the leadership of the clan. He takes the loss of Joseph very personally, but yet he makes no move to head away and buy him back! Rather, he joins with the others in their plan and assists them in covering Joseph’s disappearance.

**Verses 31 – 36.** The plan they hatch looks good on the surface, for no-one was set free from their status as a bond slave, unless they did an exceptional feat of service. They have Joseph’s dreams as their clue that this is exactly the sort of thing they ought to expect from Joseph, but they have already hardened their hearts against believing he is special in any way.

They do not see what God is doing in their midst, because they do not want their life style and life pattern disturbed. This sinful mental attitude hinders God’s people in every generation still. We hinder and quench the work of the Holy Spirit within our own lives by our pre-occupation with the things of this life rather than the things of eternity. God calls us to be looking for his intervention in history, not to live as if the Lord does not care for us. Acts 1:7-11, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-24.

They pretend that Joseph has been killed in the fields by a lion or bear. This was a possibility in this day, as both Asiatic lions and bears still roamed these hills and would for several centuries later. They claim that they don’t know that this is Joseph’s coat, nor what has happened to them, leaving their father to jump to the wrong conclusion and so ask them no questions. Jacob does conclude that his son has been torn to pieces by some wild beast. He mourns for him for many days in deepest sorrow and regret.

Grief is always complicated by guilt and regret, and so it will be with Jacob, and likely with Isaac also. The sons and daughters of Jacob try to comfort him but he refuses to stop his mourning process. He has not been a present and active father to his children, and now he becomes more introverted and isolated in his grief. As the family in Canaan are isolated in their deceit and grief, God’s plan continues for Joseph and Moses ends this section by noting that the Midianites sold Joseph to an officer of the Egyptian Royal Guard.

#### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Spiritual vacuum’s will always be filled with something. Jacob fails to educate his sons in righteousness and so they grow up used to living in their Old Sin Nature’s power. We have a daily choice also, to walk in the Holy Spirit’s power and God’s Truth, or to follow our Old Sin Nature area of weakness.
2. Favouritism in any family or church will lead to disaster for that place. It will always lead to further mental attitude sins, and envy and jealousy are the fast track to murder! If we do not examine ourselves for hidden sins, and deal with those we discover, we will fall into greater evil over time. The sons of Jacob failed to grow spiritually, for they didn’t care to; they preferred their pleasant pastoral lives and the pleasures of the world. They failed to see what God was doing through their family and so they missed the blessing that they could have had as inheritors of the Abrahamic promises. They were in the line of Abraham but failed to live like him, or even expect the Lord to speak with them as he had to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had the dreams of Joseph to warn them that something special was happening but they chose not to believe or pay heed to it.
3. It is the senior men’s solemn responsibility before the Lord to take spiritual leadership in situations that demand it. All the older men fail Joseph here, for none state the moral principles and none are prepared to put their lives on the line for their brother. Jacob has failed to protect his son, who he still uses to spy on the others rather than directly rebuke them himself for their crookedness.
4. Joseph is still in the Lord’s hands and the plan of God for him will work out to the blessing of them all. Moses tells us the story knowing the end point and he wants us to remember that God knows the end point of our own life story, and that we are in God’s hands, not the hands of those who hate us.

#### **Notes**

**CHAPTER 38****INTRODUCTION**

We model all our behaviours as parents, and we cannot complain when our children follow us into whatever behaviour they have seen us regularly practice. If dysfunction occurs anywhere in the family and is not confronted, then the evil ignored will grow and will infect others with its destructive power. If the dysfunction continues to the point of hatred of the Lord, in addition to despising of his commandments, then it will get to the place where the sin unto death will be administered to the persons in open rebellion against God and His Laws. If this goes on to the fourth generation, then that family will cease to exist.

Israel and his sons come close to the negative point where divine discipline would see them judged and eliminated, but in grace there is repentance and through Joseph's learning of God's truth, there will be deliverance for them all. Jacob has had an Old Sin Nature point of weakness in the area of sexual behaviours, and has not really dealt with this, and so there have been flow-on effects of his multiple wives and focus upon his sexual pleasures to the detriment of family life and the education of his children.

The result has been already the seduction and rape of Dinah, and then the incestuous actions of Reuben. This trend down hill in the moral area continues with the behaviour of Judah. This is another chapter that is painful to read, and Moses tells the story in straight forward language, that does not make moral points by moralizing, but simply by telling the story and showing God's judgments in the process. Judah will rise to be the leader, but he will arise to this high point from a very dark life indeed. This passage gives hope for all who have dark pasts – never hide your past if the Lord has transformed you, for that is the true gospel message – good news to the truly lost.

Judah is judged for all that we read here. Sexual sin is foolishness, for it destroys the body, the mind, genuine marriage, the family, and finally society itself. Proverbs 1:7-12, 2:10-20, 5:1-10, 6:23-35, 7:5-23, 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, 2 Timothy 2:22.

You will have noted that the Proverbs passages read as if the woman is the seducer every time. This is only because Solomon is writing to his sons about the sexual dangers of experienced women who may try to sexually entice them in order to become princesses. The reverse is also the case, where men, exactly like the seductive women of Proverbs, entice naïve women and destroy them through sexual activity. Sexual sin is just like any other, in that it can be confessed, and avoided, but it is unlike many, in that it can destroy the body itself through Sexually Transmitted Diseases. 1 Corinthians 6:18.

**GENESIS 38: 1-14**

**1** And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. **2** And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. **3** And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. **4** And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. **5** And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. **6** And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. **7** And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. **8** And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. **9** And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. **10** And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also. **11** Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house. **12** And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. **13** And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. **14** And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife."

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1- 5.** Around this time of the sale of Joseph these events occur in the family of Judah. It is twenty three years before Jacob will go down into Egypt to join Joseph, so this occurs within this time frame of around two decades. Judah was part of the pastoral care team for his father's flocks when Joseph is sold, but for some reason this has changed and he is running his own flocks as we enter this chapter. Maybe he has been revolted by his own and the other's treatment of Joseph and feels great personal guilt; we cannot know, but it is a sign that the family of Jacob is starting to break up after Joseph's disappearance.

We find here that he heads away from Hebron down to the lowlands and pitches his tent in the neighbourhood of Adullam and enters into a friendly relationship with a Canaanite called Hirah, and there he sees a Canaanite woman

whose father is called Shuah, and takes her as his wife and has three sons to her. The three sons are Er, Onan, and Shelah. Moses mentions the birth place of the last son as Chezib, or Achzib. (Joshua 15:44, Micah 1:14)

Now the name of this place is not a good one, it means the place of lying or deception. It is a name of warning for the sons of Judah, for his deception and Tamar's will be a lasting warning against immorality and double standards to them all. This will also be important for the descendents of this last man who will know where their ancestor was born and can go there, for it will be within the area given to the tribe of Judah. The birth place of the first two is irrelevant for both will die before fathering any children.

The meaning of the three children's names is interesting. His first son was called "Er", which means "a watcher", or furtive one. The second is called "Onan", which means "iniquity". These are not good names for little boys and they will both grow up as sexually loose men, just like their father, uncle, and grand-father.

Now the time frame Moses has given us is around twenty three years for the events here to happen before Jacob and the others go down into Egypt. It may be that the first son was born even before Joseph was sent into Egypt, but as Moses has said it is "around this time", only a year or two can be granted. So the judgment of God will fall on both these older boys around twenty years of age; which is the age of accountability for the Exodus generation, as we have seen above. The youngest child is called Shelah, meaning "prayer" which is a sign that things may have been better for his mother spiritually around the time of his birth, although Judah has been heading steadily down hill during this time. Within the next twenty years the following events occur.

**Verses 6 – 11.** Judah marries his first son to a girl named Tamar. Moses is very blunt about what happens next, and not a great deal of time passes here; perhaps a year, but not much more. The young man Er sins so greatly before the Lord that he sins the "Sin Unto Death" and dies. Such sins in scripture that lead to the Sin Unto Death normally involve, directly lying to God, and occult or sexually abusive practices. Refer to the BTB study at the end of this section. This young man was a real pervert of some sort and the Lord eliminates him from the earth. Psalms 55:20-23.

The practice of what was called "Levirate Marriage" was normal for this day, whereby a childless man's widow was able to marry the younger brother of her dead husband in order that the oldest son's name might not be lost from the genealogy of the people, and that he might have inheritance and posterity. The first child born of such a marriage was to be named for the oldest brother and the second and subsequent children were named for the living husband. Deuteronomy 25:5ff.

Onan does not want this and isn't interested in Tamar, or his brother's name being carried on. He has sex with Tamar but always withdraws before he ejaculates and so his sperm is on the ground rather than in Tamar. She cannot get pregnant, but he is having all the sex he wants with her, and the implication of Moses is, he probably is having sex with others also.

Onan is, like his brother, condemned to death for this action, as just as "wicked" as his older brother, and the use of the strong word, "displeased", indicates that there is more here than just failing to get Tamar pregnant as some commentators argue. God was "displeased" and this indicates that sexual immorality was rife here, with an arrogance and self centeredness that was leading to Tamar being treated with contempt.

Judah fails to pray this through or face any problems within the family, or in his own behaviours that need addressing. We are urged to "examine ourselves" as we approach the Communion Table lest there be any sin that might bring God's judgment upon us, and this habit ought to be a daily one! 1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5. Judah tells Tamar to wait in her father's house until his third son grows to the right age for marriage. The age for marriage could be any time after about fourteen in this day, but given the judgment of God on the two older boys, I suspect each were over twenty, and that Judah is waiting until Shelah is twenty himself.

**Verses 12 – 14.** Tamar is quietly thinking as she waits and soon she realizes that she is never going to be given the youngest boy, especially after the death of the three boy's mother. It may be that she attended the funeral and overheard Judah's concerns, but she now knows that she is going to be left aside in her father's house and never will have a family. Judah is comforted and consoled after the death of his wife. Moses does not tell us how he consoles himself, but his predictable habit of using prostitutes alongside the road is known by Tamar, and Moses leaves it open that this is how he was "consoled". Judah is living in a self centred and immoral way and the results of this will be moral judgment upon him that will lead to his repentance.

Judah's friend Hirah the Adullamite and he are clearly very close, and when it comes time to visit his own flocks he heads out with his old friend as company. They have been firm friends for twenty years now and he trusts him in everything and does not hide his sexual behaviour from him, and they may even share this pre-occupation with sex. They head to Timnath at the time of the sheep shearing to ensure that wool is not stolen. Tamar has kept contact with her father in law's house and hears that he has gone off to Timnath, and that is all she needs to hear, for she knows he will be seeking sexual comfort there, and so will position herself to take advantage of his well known weakness. She takes this action because she sees that Shelah is fully grown and he is not given to her as a husband.

## **PERSONAL AND PASTORAL APPLICATION**

1. God judges in the area of sexual sins. We are used to excusing all sorts of sins as all right in our modern age, but God's standard remains secure and it is that unrighteousness will destroy a family and a nation if left unchecked. Let us ensure we guard ourselves from temptations in these areas. Judah has a great friend, but we are left wondering just how positive this friendship is for Judah. Hirah may be a bad influence with whom he enjoys sensual pleasures. Their friendship will not last, and Judah will go down to Egypt when the famine occurs. He will leave his friend behind forever, yet he has wasted twenty years with this man. Let us pause and reflect upon this. We ought to have our friends from amongst the people we will spend eternity with. If we will not spend eternity with a person, then we ought to be careful about the time we spend with them here and now, lest their morals become ours.
  
2. Judah has failed to examine himself and deal with his own sins through this time. While Joseph is learning about righteousness and faith in an Egyptian prison, Judah is carrying on with an immoral lifestyle that allows Tamar to predict his behaviours in advance and use them to achieve her goal of having a child. Let us set ourselves the goal of regular self audits of behaviours and thought patterns, and let us deal with sinful patterns quickly! No one should ever be able to predict our patterns of sinful weakness, for such patterns ought to have been eliminated by the work of the Holy Spirit within our life.

Notes

**GENESIS 38:15-30**

**“15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. 16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? 17 And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? 18 And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. 19 And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. 20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. 21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place. 22 And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. 23 And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her. 24 And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. 25 When she was brought forth, she sent to her father in law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. 26 And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. 27 And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. 28 And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29 And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. 30 And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.”**

## REFLECTION

**Verses 15 – 18.** Judah is used to negotiating with the prostitutes of the day and the interchange that occurs here reads as a transcript, for it is one. Judah himself must have recorded this in the family history as a warning to his son and his descendants through Tamar. Judah's is straight forward in his account of the transaction. He wants sex and Tamar asks what he will pay for the sexual encounter. He answers that he will pay a kid from the flock once the shearing is done. A live goat is a valuable commodity and would be equivalent to a day's wages for a labourer.

She makes it clear that she doesn't trust him, which he would expect from a prostitute, and so her asking for personal pledges is also a normal thing where a promise is made to pay something. She asks for goods of greater value than the kid. This also is a normal practice from this day so that there was a built in penalty for anyone not paying what they promised, rather than our day where only a 10% deposit is lost.

Tamar is veiled during this discussion and she could be speaking in one of the common trade languages, like Akkadian, rather than that which she used in her life with Judah's sons in his camp. She may also be dressed in the garb of a sacred prostitute of Astarte, so she would not have stood out in this countryside, and her dress will make Judah think of anything other than Tamar or his home.

He does not spot that this is Tamar at all, and does not bother looking her in the face, as he simply is having sex, not making love to her. She is just a sexual object and he uses her and then leaves; he has depersonalized her and abused her, but she will have her revenge on his sinful lifestyle. He is operating as an animal and like a sheep to the slaughter he will be taken because of this. Proverbs 2:16-19, 5:3-20. We are urged to find sexual satisfaction within the loving relationship of a right man with his right woman, and no-where else. God is not trying to rob us of fun here, but save us from disaster.

Notice what Tamar asks for from Judah. These are things that are clearly going to identify him as the father of any child she conceives here. She gets his staff, his "bracelets" and his ring. This is a very good move on her part, for she will be accused of adultery later and will be under penalty of death because of this, but these things will prove who is guilty and who is innocent. Notice that he apparently wears an arm clasp or bracelet. These were both ornamental, and sometimes they were associated with pagan religious worship. They would be offered to the Lord as silver or gold offerings by the Israelites, who were encouraged not to seek such jewellery. Exodus 35:22, Numbers 31:50.

However the word Moses uses here does **not** mean a precious metal bracelet, but a length of cord or lace that tied up the sleeves when physical work was being done. It is of no real value in itself, but the way it was worn, frayed, and coloured will identify it as Judah's and no-one else. The ring will be hand made and unique. She takes no chances with three objects, for one could be lost, or claimed to be stolen, but the three would never leave his control without his permission, and no thief would steal the arm bands as they have no intrinsic value.

**Verses 19 - 23.** As soon as Tamar is able to leave without Judah seeing her she leaves and heads for home. Judah wants his staff and ring back, and without the cords to hold up his sleeves will not have been able to do much work. As an aside, the presence of the "bracelets", or cords to hold his sleeves up, tell us that he has bought for himself a long sleeved robe now! Judah has appointed himself the leader of his own clan. He is baffled when he sends his friend to pay the prostitute that she cannot be found. Notice that his friend goes to pay the woman; this tells us the nature of their friendship, and that this man is as immoral as Judah is.

The locals tell Hirah that there isn't a prostitute operating in this area at all as far as they know. He returns to Judah and reports the baffling findings. The word for prostitute here is a religious word. It is a word for a woman sacred to the Canaanite goddess Astarte, the goddess of fertility, who served the goddess by sex, the money from which went to the local temple. Judah has over time fallen into a lot more than just loose living with his Canaanite friend Hirah. If this was his habit, he has been playing with the Canaanite religion, and his friend Hirah may be the influence operating here.

It is a dangerous thing to have a pagan friend who you share your daily life with, for the compromises will all be from yourself, for a pagan will not meet you half way with religious truth. Judah feels he has been "taken" by this woman, and covers his own embarrassment at this by saying, "let her keep the pledges", for he does not want the story told abroad if Hiram searches further a field for the woman, for it will expose Judah to ridicule. He has pride and also he doesn't want it known that he uses the sacred priestesses. His concern for "privacy" here is hypocritical, for his habits are well known, even if he doesn't see it at this point. Once he is exposed and shamed he will repent of this and record the entire story to ensure Tamar is seen by all as just, and he as unjust and immoral.

**Verses 24 – 25.** Three months go past and Judah hears that Tamar is pregnant. The conclusion is jumped to by all that she has been immoral, and there is no other explanation that anyone can offer. The penalty for adultery in this day was death, and amongst the Canaanites it was death by being burned alive. Child sacrifice, the burning of children alive, was actually part of their religious observance at times, and the Israelites later would "pass their children through the fires of Molech". Such things were an abomination before God, a great evil, and the Israelites were ordered to have nothing to do with these people's religious practices. 2 Kings 17:17, 31, 21:6, 23:10, 2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6.

Judah is full of self righteous indignation when he hears this and takes the opportunity to rid himself of Tamar permanently by execution. This will be the end of the "bad luck" he has had with his sons. Tamar's answer awaits her arrest, and when she is publicly hauled before her village elders she presents her evidence in such a way that it makes it

difficult for Judah to do anything other than tell the truth, for everyone in this group will recognize the ring, the staff and the lengths of cord as Judah's.

**Verses 26 – 30.** Judah confronts the truth immediately and identifies that Tamar has operated in a more "moral" or righteous manner than he has. He immediately states the just cause that Tamar had, in that he had not given his son Shelah to be her husband. Judah also shows himself totally changed, for he does not take sexual advantage of her again, but she is treated with respect as his daughter in law for the rest of her life.

When immoral men have taken sexual advantage of a woman it is most likely that they will despise that woman, and so this respectful behaviour is the fruit of the life change that begins in Judah this day. The birth of the twins was unusual, in that the arm of one comes out first, and the mid-wife ties a scarlet thread around it's wrist, but the arm is withdrawn and the other one comes out first. The twins names are Pharez (meaning, the one breaking out, the one who pressed forward first), and Zarah (meaning "rising one" – the one who tried to come out first). Pharez, or Perez, as his name is sometimes spelled, becomes the ancestor of King David, and of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tamar is honoured as one of the women mentioned in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ruth 4:18ff, 1 Chronicles 2:5ff, Matthew 1:3, Luke 3:33.

**PERSONAL AND PASTORAL APPLICATION**

1. There is no support from Moses or the Lord for anything Judah does by way of his sexual life here. He has compromised far more than just sexually, and clearly is used to dealing with the "sacred" prostitutes of Astarte. He has played with paganism and compromised his witness to the true faith of his father Jacob, his grandfather Isaac, and great grandfather Abraham. His behaviour is evil and we are warned by this chapter to take immorality seriously, for we can all fall easily into this sin if our guard is down.
2. Judah has his great friend Hirah, and they clearly love each other and enjoy each other's company, but this man is not a believer and has been a bad influence for twenty years. Judah left his father's camp probably to avoid the daily confrontation with guilt as he saw his father's sad face at the loss of Joseph. He has fled from his guilt and found greater sin. This is always the pattern with unconfessed sin; it will always open the door to other sins and even great evils. God in grace will turn this to blessing, but this man is a warning of how far a good man can fall if he fails to deal with his sins.
3. Tamar is careful to secure evidence for her actions. She doesn't trust anyone and certainly does not trust Judah. She is wise in this, for trust in people is weakness that we ought not to fall into unless we know their character well. Jesus did not trust himself to the crowds and neither ought we to. John 2:23-25. Tamar sought solid evidence, and at least "three witnesses" to the truth.

Believers in difficult situations need to practice the same level of care in gathering evidence of the truth, for the enemy will try to secure our conviction of falsehood on the basis of lies if we let him. We are to be as cunning as serpents and as harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16.

Many believers allow themselves to be entrapped by lies because they trust the word of people they have no evidence are worthy of trust. Let us remember how careful Tamar was for her life was at stake, and remember that in the service of the Lord our reputation is often at stake, and we need to protect ourselves from even the appearance of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

4. The two boys born as a result of what is technically incest are not judged for their parent's sin. The innocent are not judged with the guilty by God, unless their hatred of God equals that of their fathers. Exodus 20:4-6, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Lamentations 5:7, Ezekiel 18:1-4. Children born illegitimately are not to be condemned or despised, for it is our new birth that matters, and in Christ we are all entered into the Royal family of God. Refer to the BTB study below. Also refer 2 Samuel 12:18-23, where the child born of adultery dies, but David's assurance is that he is in heaven.

**Notes**

## **CHAPTER 39**

### **INTRODUCTORY PRINCIPLES FOR THE EARLY LIFE OF JOSEPH**

ROMANS 8:28 and PROVERBS 23:4-9

Many believers quote the first half of Romans 8:28 only; "All things work together for good". It is important to read the whole of Romans 8:28, as all things do not work together for good for unbelievers, nor for a permanently carnal Christian, but only to those "that love God and are called according to his purpose". The Lord calls us all to centre ourselves in the plan he has for our life and trust Him to work out that plan, no matter what we see happening in our daily life by way of pressure situation. All we focus upon is walking on his path, and we leave the outcome with the Lord. Joseph will have to learn this lesson in a situation of grave pressure in a tough Egyptian jail, while Moses will in the Arabian desert.

The principles behind Romans 8:28 that we will see working out in this chapter before us are:

[a] Everything that happens to a believer is not necessarily good; some things are bad. It was not good for Joseph to be beaten up, stripped and thrown into a well. It was not good to be a slave, it was not good that Potiphar's wife lied about him, or to be thrown as a rapist into the central dungeon of the prison and left there for years.

[b] All things can work together for good if you are in step with the plan of God. You must be in the Father's will for your life. If you are in a wrong situation you claim 1 John 1:9 rather than this verse, and get back into the Lord's will for you. Once back in fellowship with the Lord, then claim this verse again.

[c] This verse does not apply to believers who are outside the will of God; who do not seek God's will but their own, or unbelievers who do not love God.

[d] God's hand is upon every situation in your life if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and daily we are encouraged to cast our cares upon the Lord, for he cares for and watches after us.

[e] The onus is upon us to stay in fellowship, to stay in the will of God for ourselves, and then relax and trust Him when things go apparently very wrong in our life. If we are where the Lord wants us, then any pressure situation will work out to the glory of God and the blessing of the believers in the area. You can claim Philippians 4:4, 1 Peter 5:6,7 to back up this verse under pressure.

Joseph also has to learn that circumstances can change dramatically and yet God remains constant in his love, power and grace towards his children. Joseph will enjoy the benefits of great wealth as a servant in the house of Potiphar, and yet he will be stripped of everything in jail, then he will gain great wealth again as second in command to Pharaoh. He learns through his life that nothing matters except the service of the Lord and walking in the path that he has prepared for us. Proverbs 23:1-9. Wealth has wings, Solomon reminds us, and it flies away quickly. When we move in the circles of the rich and powerful Solomon warns us to be stable in our mind and grounded in God's Word at all times, lest we get enticed by the pleasures of wealth and power, and be distracted into fatal side paths.

**Proverbs 23:1-9** *"1. When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:  
2. And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.  
3. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.  
4. Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.  
5. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.  
6. Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:  
7. For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.  
8. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.  
9. Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words."*

### **GENESIS 39**

In the opening verses the fruit of the Spirit was with Joseph and his unbelieving master Potiphar saw it and promoted him. Joseph was also a very handsome man. The household of Potiphar was blessed by association with Joseph. Joseph was not a victim of circumstances here, for he was in the hands of the Lord all the way.

Joseph is starting to learn that God is in control, and he can relax, and serve well, and be blessed in his service. When you realize that your situation is not of your own making you can put your hands in the Lord's hands and rely on Him. 1 Peter 5:6-7. The fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life is then peace, joy, long suffering, and patience.

There is no such thing as "good luck" in the Christian life, there is God's will and our obedience, but there is also God's discipline, foolishness, and your sin. There is the direction of God and the superintendence of His power and His might, but there is always the opportunity to step outside God's path every moment, and then trouble will begin. It is God's will, or your stupidity every moment of time. Even stupidity can be confessed and repented of and the principles of Romans

8:28ff then apply. Joseph trusts the Lord who in due course promotes him, but Joseph has a satanic enemy and he is not ready for the attack when it comes upon him. James 4:6-10.

Potiphar was the general in charge of the Egyptian palace guard and as such was therefore the top soldier in the land. Joseph was made an overseer of his whole household. However Joseph has major problems with Potiphar's wife. There is an old saying, "there is none so dangerous as a woman scorned". If a woman makes a pass at a man and that man rejects strongly that woman, then the man may have made an enemy who will kill him either verbally, by reputation, or even physically. A woman feels things deeper than a man, as she is made finer than man. When a woman is at her best she is the finest of God's creations, when she is at her worst she is more dangerous than any man.

Potiphar's wife made repeated passes at Joseph, which is quite typical of women who are neglected by their husbands. Some counselor has said that eighty percent of women in their marriages are neglected by their husbands from time to time, and this is one of the reasons why a married woman is a potential source of temptation for ministers. Women and men alike are looking for people who will give them attention. We all have that deep inner need for affirmation and approval; we love to be needed, valued and affirmed by others.

If we are neglected in our closest relationship, then we become vulnerable to the charms of others who do pay us attention. Many ministers fall into this sexual temptation problem because they do not guard their own relationships, or they are ignorant of the needs and desires of others. Two thirds of all who leave ministry leave due to adultery! We are not to be ignorant of seduction and it's ever present danger to ministry. Sexual temptation remains Satan's easiest way to destroy a ministry. Proverbs 2:11-22, 5:1-23, 6:23-35, 7:1-23.

Make sure, that if as a pastor, you are going into a situation where you may be propositioned sexually, that you have a companion as a witness. One thing you do not ever do, is do what Joseph did. You should not ever be in any situation where you feel you need to run; if you think you may need to run from a place, do not go there alone, or do not go at all, but seek the Lord's guidance as to the people there and what to do to bring the gospel message to them. When a person is propositioning you, that person has a problem, but they will make a serious problem for you unless you have witnesses to what occurs.

In agape love you should be concerned to get help for them if they desire it, but also be ready to openly rebuke and expose them, or counsel them if possible also. You need to be ready and able before the Lord to help them deal with the sin in their life that has brought them to this situation; but you cannot ever do this alone without compromising your ministry.

In cases like this you need great discernment, and someone you can call upon to act confidentially in matters like this. Within churches any opposite sex meetings ought to be attended by at least one deacon or deaconess as advisers and witnesses. Such meetings should always be in an office, never a home. It is vital that you approach any situation that could lead to sexual temptation/accusation with prayerfulness beforehand, biblical guidance and the assurance of the Holy Spirit's presence, mental alertness, a witness, and your Bible open, so that you can seek a godly solution to the person's problems, or at least escape unharmed yourself.

We are to care for the lost, but not be foolish in the process, and so become lost ourselves. If it is possible we are to seek ways to stabilize the situation we confront, and if it is possible, seek ways to assist the tempter in mending their marital relationship, or direct them to appropriate help. When confronted with this, many Christians act like Joseph and panic. Moses has already given us his age, and so we are not to blame Joseph here, for he was unschooled in this sort of thing. With the book of Proverbs before us, and this story here, we are however to be blamed if we fall into temptation in this sort of situation.

Joseph tries to discuss the constant sexual teasing with Potiphar's wife, but people, when they are sexually inflamed and have a sense of entitlement to seduce, do not reason well and such effort is generally wasted unless backed by strong Bible Doctrine that the person can see we know and live. He says that this would be sinning against Potiphar but this has little effect on her. His moral standards are high and hers are low.

You have to find a meeting place to meet at for such discussions, and the right one here is the Word of God, but if this is rejected, then you must guard yourself and not trust to the "good nature" of the pagan, for they have by then proved that they don't have one! Day by day she propositioned Joseph. When a person is like this, you need to have a person with you all the time as your witness, report them, or preferably, stay well away from them.

Joseph's only solution here is to report her and get her into trouble, and possibly jailed or killed. She leaves him without another option, but he does not see the danger, and hopes she will stop at some point. Such a view is foolishness, for once it is clear there is a pattern, Satan's people don't tend to stop! The believer must then act to protect their reputation and the Lord's good name. Joseph pulls back from exposing her, and so opens himself to the certainty that she will expose him, and he is finally himself jailed for many years.

One day Joseph finds himself with her alone in the house and he again rejects her advances. She pounces this time and grabs his outer clothing. He ran out of the house in his underwear and left his outer clothing in her hands (the equivalent of his trousers in today's world). Joseph is totally inexperienced with a woman of this type and what to do about her. She knows that Joseph may tell Potiphar now, so she beats him to the punch.

Potiphar believes his wife's version of the story and puts Joseph into the inner prison of the court. He is where political prisoners are kept, and there is no release from this place for him, just slow death. Injustice is a terrible thing to cope with especially when no one will listen to you. Joseph is unjustly accused of attempted rape and no-one believes him. He is confronted with an impossible situation, and the challenge of such places in our walk through this life, is to meet the Lord there and trust him for the outcome. Jeremiah 43:11, 45:4-5, 46:28, 1 Peter 5:5-7. He learns and trusts.

In verse 21 Moses will remind us, that the Lord is with Joseph, and that does not stop in jail, and he will show him mercy and favour even as a prisoner, and soon we discover he is in charge of the other prisoners. At the end of chapter 39 he is in jail rather than in a pit as at the end of chapter 38, so that nothing has really changed.

This is Moses point; nothing has changed; God is still with him in jail, just as before and he will be blessed there. "I'm in jail and I will produce fruit here and leave my case in the Lord's hands," says Joseph recognizing he is in God's hands. 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:20-24.

Moses message is that the Lord will not let any of us down, any more than he let Joseph down. If the Lord lets you down He will let Himself down and he never does that. We are secure in his hand, for we are his hand! John 10:28-29.

### **GENESIS 39:1-13**

**39:1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. 2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. 5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. 6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured. 7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. 8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master knows not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? 10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. 11 And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. 13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth."**

### **REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 - 3.** Joseph is unable to control the events that drive his destiny forwards towards Egypt. He is a slave and does not weep or wail about it; he simply accepts things and moves forward to seek the best path in his new life by working as hard as he can for his new master. He accepts his lot without complaint and devotes himself to work. This is a challenge to us all; that in all situations we find ourselves we are called to work as hard as we can in order to bring the Lord's name before others as a name of honour and respect when they see our good deeds. Matthew 5:14-16, 1 Corinthians 7:20-24, Philippians 2:14-18, 4:11-13. To be fully active in the Lord's plan for our life, we are to work at what we could call, "sustainable full speed", all the time, and in every service opportunity.

God's hand is upon all our ways and guides us into the places and to meet the people we need to in order to fulfill the plan for our life. Joseph could have been sold to anyone, but the Lord sovereignly guides the Ishmaelites to sell him to Potiphar, the very man who can teach him many things, and then ensure that Joseph is sent to the right jail for his next appointed meeting with the butler and the baker of Pharaoh.

Joseph does not see it, but he is in Potiphar's house to learn the Egyptian language, become clear on their customs and beliefs, so that when he meets the butler and the baker he is able to fully communicate with them. Potiphar is high up enough in the civil service/army to be mixing in the right circles, so Joseph learns all the protocols of the court in the household, but he would not be meeting the two men that he later must meet.

The Lord's timing is perfect, for Joseph has enough years in Potiphar's service to learn all he needs to know about Egypt to be accepted by Egyptians as one of them, and later to be able to rule over their nation. In Potiphar's household and also in jail he will learn all he needs to know about organization to rule.

He needed to be bought by the right man to achieve that, and he needs to arrive in the jail at the right time to be able to meet the two men of the court after their failed coup or plot. God arranges these details without Joseph even being aware it is happening. Joseph's part is to be active in obedient service to each master, and be 100% hard working in his post at each point. This is a good example of divine sovereignty and free will merging into the fulfillment of the plan of God for Joseph's life.

God does all that is needed to ensure the right things happen at the right time to produce the right situations for learning and personal growth for Joseph, his role is to be obedient and to work with focused energy in each place he finds himself and to learn to trust the Lord for the outcomes in each case. Read each of these scriptures carefully if you have missed them so far in the text, for they sum up these lessons and remind us of the vital need to walk with the Lord, and just what that phrase fully means. Psalms 55:16-17, 22-23, 75:5-7, Proverbs 3:1-7, 15:33, Jeremiah 45:5, Philippians 4:6-7, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5-7.

Our call is exactly like Joseph's. We are to leave the meeting of the right people and the finding of the right situations in the Lord's hands, but we are to be alert and take every godly opportunity for service we receive, and we are to work with 100% energy, "as unto the Lord". Philippians 4:1-5, Colossians 3:16-24. We are to "rise early" to serve and do so looking for what the Lord will bring out of each situation.

Our task is not to second guess God and over think, but simply to work hard in every opportunity the Lord opens up and prayerfully seek the full significance of each event and circumstance we find ourselves in. Let us stand with Jeremiah and be able to say to our generation that we have consistently "risen early" to speak and work the truth to them. Jeremiah 7:13, 25, 11:7, 25:3-4, 26:5, 29:19, 32:33, 35:14-15, 44:4.

**Verses 4 - 6.** These verses introduce us to the true prosperity gospel message of the Holy Scriptures. True prosperity is blessing from the Lord for obedient service in the path we are called to serve within, "as unto the Lord". Joseph was a slave to this man Potiphar, but he serves as a prince before him and devotes all his energies into doing the best job he can for his master.

There is no arrogance in Joseph's service now, simply total obedience and thought as to what will best benefit his master. He does not seek his own good, nor advancement, but his master's blessing. He is no longer the young man with the long sleeved coat lording it over his brothers; he is now a humble servant who sees that his advancement is in the Lord's hands, and will come through his being an obedient servant, even as a slave with no human hope of freedom.

Joseph devotes himself to service and so the Lord blesses all he does. The pagan officer sees that Joseph is blessed and that all he does is both well done and prospers Potiphar's household. Joseph brings in efficiencies and his honesty and energy inspires the household staff. Potiphar's business interests grow and develop and he recognizes that this is Joseph's doing, and when Joseph is praised he gives credit to his God Jehovah, and so Potiphar sees that Joseph's God brings good fortune to his household and promotes Joseph steadily through the ranks in his household until he is in charge of everything and all Potiphar does is turn up to meals, everything else is in Joseph's hands. Moses also mentions that through this time Joseph grows physically into a very handsome, muscular and strong young man who is very attractive to the opposite sex.

**Verses 7 - 9.** Joseph shows his honesty and also his naivety here in this interchange with this sexually obsessed woman. She seeks his sexual company as her lover. This may be her first encounter of this sort, or Joseph may be the last in a long line; we are not told, although Moses indicates by his account of her persistence, that she was probably used to breaking down men's resistance to her charms.

Penalties for adultery in the ancient world's cultures went from dismemberment, through imprisonment for life, to death. Adultery was a dangerous game but it was still played by those who sought excitement, and it still is, no matter what the penalty. Diodorus Siculus, in his work, Book 1:78, records that the Egyptians determined 1000 lashes upon a man who seduced another man's wife, to be given over many months in jail. It may be that this was the punishment of Joseph and that he had to endure regular beatings for months before he was lifted up to rule in the prison.

People who despise God's law will however pay scant attention to the consequences from men, for those who deliberately enter this path are self absorbed and self centred. They believe that they are special and that they will escape all consequences, and avoid all condemnation. When they are caught and brought to justice they always complain about "unfairness" because their narcissistic nature makes them believe that they are entitled to get away with whatever they want.

We are to be ready if we are in ministry for this sort of attack. When a person suggests immorality you had better be ready with a well practiced short and sharp answer, for all long explanations simply make them intrigued and desirous to see if they can break down your logical wall. Only a strong moral wall stands against determined evil. This woman doesn't care about offending her husband, for she is clearly used to fooling him and he is used to ignoring her most of the time!

Joseph's reason for not entering into sex with her is feeble in her eyes. He uses logic when she is well out of that ball park! She has looked and lusted and wants what she desires, and could care less about Joseph's concern not to offend her husband. She doesn't care about him; that is why she wants Joseph! Adultery has it's motive power in either, firstly, addiction to pleasure or power, or secondly to the mental attitude sins of anger, envy, resentment or bitterness towards the spouse who is being cheated on. Adulterers are driven by lust, not by logic, and so appeals to reason or custom, or law are useless.

Joseph has made it clear that this is a sin against her husband and against God. He has clearly stated his reasons and they are good ones, just irrelevant to this woman's frame of reference, which is purely sensual. Joseph does not recognize her way of thinking, nor does he take steps to secure himself in her presence as he was able. He was in

charge of all the servants, and while there were some clearly there who resented this “upstart” from being placed over them, (who this woman will appeal to later), but he would have had enough authority to order a couple to be with him at all times. He fails to see the danger he is in, and his youth and poor childhood education in the immoral household of Jacob may excuse him, but it does not excuse us as pastors today if we are not vigilant in this area, for we have the clear warnings of many scriptures to beware such situations, and be as wise as serpents in such places, while continuing as harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16.

**Verses 10 – 13.** This woman is a thoroughly self obsessed person and has her eyes on the goal of Joseph’s seduction and will not be put off at all. Joseph does not see her malice, thinking she will finally “give up”, but this sort of person never does until they have reached their goal or destroyed it.

Joseph enters the house alone one too many times and she springs her trap. She has ensured that her own servants are carefully out of the way, but able to be called in. She makes her move and grabs him sexually. Joseph has no alternative but to leave his garments beside her on the bed or couch. This tells us that he had been sitting down trying to reason with her yet again. He was in a situation where logic was well past it’s “use by date”.

He flees and hopes that things will return to normal again and the game of cat and mouse will simply continue, with tomorrow’s encounter seeing him get his trousers back! He is wrong and as she looks at the clothing in her hand she decides he is not going to play her game and so must be eliminated before he talks. She moves to have him severely dealt with as an attempted seducer. In the immorality stakes, the first one to firmly end things fully and finally, must move overwhelmingly and suddenly, or they will be destroyed. Joseph does not see the malice here until he feels the lash upon his back. Proverbs 23:27-28.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. We are warned in scripture that we are not to be ignorant of Satan’s devices. In this chapter we see a device of Satan that he continues to use, for it is so successful with all who allow arrogance or ignorance to leave them open to sexual temptation or false sexual accusation. We are warned by the Lord in many passages in his Word to be on our guard against the “wiles of the devil” yet many ministers still fail to take the precautions required to keep safe from public disgrace in this matter. Let us practice the safest protocols to keep ourselves from any temptations, and also from any situations where we might be falsely accused of improper behaviour. Let us be sure, that if we serve the Lord in power and truth that the enemy will launch all manner of attacks against us, including sexual attack. Let us be ready for the enemy by safe protocols and pure living.
  
2. God’s Plan is perfect and will certainly work out; the only variable is our obedience to it as it unfolds before our eyes. We are called to be spiritually alert daily, in order to see what it might be that the Lord wishes us to do today. Let us be alert, and obedient, and energetic in our work for the Lord, ever seeking his face so that we do not miss the smallest instruction. We are not to be like dumb animals needing bits and bridles to keep us moving in the right direction, but to be looking to the slightest look from the Lord to be obedient to his will for us. Read Psalms 32:8-11, and be rebuked for any slackness you have practiced in this matter, and be encouraged to walk in the Spirit again. Also, do a word study in your concordance of the word “ignorant”, and see how many times in scripture we are ordered “NOT” to be ignorant of God’s will, word and path for our life! Let us be wise in the realities of the enemy’s strategies and not be made fools of by evil men or women.
  
3. There is one only who blesses, and one alone who safely lifts us up, and that is the Lord God. The Lord lifts up our work and blesses our paths. We are called to be totally devoted to the Lord’s path and his service alone, for there alone is the path to lasting blessing. Joseph learns this in Potiphar’s house, and even though he is caught in the sexual trap Satan lays for him, God’s plan for his life is not stopped nor is the plan hindered in any real way. Joseph must pay a heavy price for his ignorance but he learns and keeps advancing in the path towards destiny, and so must we, even if we receive a beating or two on the way. Hebrews 12:4-13.
  
4. Be sure that the enemy will attack you if you serve the Lord in spirit and truth and be sure that the enemy will provide a “good” temptation, for Satan has many people in his service to call upon. Be on guard at all times, and do not carelessly walk into paths where the enemy may launch an unexpected attack. We have an eternal destiny and that means there is a task to do here upon the earth in Spirit and in Truth. The enemy will do ANYTHING to stop this. Be ready, be alert, and be careful as you walk through each day upon this earth. Do not relax and be casual about temptation, for the day you do there is an agent of the enemy ready to lie about you as Potiphar’s wife lied about Joseph.

**Notes**

**GENESIS 39:14-23**

**“14 That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15 And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. 16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. 19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. 20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. 23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 14 – 16.** She moves quickly to build her story of deceit. Joseph does not see it coming and has headed away and likely simply carried on his duties, having got a spare set of clothes from his vast wardrobe. He thinks he is safe until the last moment when Potiphar comes home. Notice her actions. Firstly she calls in the very men who Joseph has been placed in authority over; men who will be interested in making him suffer. They have been clearly told to “stand by”, for they are easily called by her. They are used to her “games” and will play along, for their lives depend upon her and she makes sure they know it. The charges she plans against Joseph are serious ones. He will go to jail for a long time and be beaten severely day after day for months as a result of this. The other serving men are happy, for one of them will take charge in Joseph's absence and they do not expect him to ever be released.

I often think about what happened to this household once Joseph was released and made second ruler! I wonder if Potiphar was still “captain of the guard” at that point. We are not told his or his wife's fate. If Moses had information about them, and given his position it would be expected he would, he doesn't tell us clearly! He does however give us a clue when the Butler tells us later, Genesis 40:3-4, and 41:10, that he and the Chief Baker were placed in the “Captain of the Guard's house”, and we are told Joseph was placed in charge of them. We will come back to this point, for the Captain of the Guard in charge of the prison may have been Potiphar himself!

Notice the racial taunts that Potiphar's wife uses against Joseph. She uses the racial differences to amplify the hatred the other servants have towards him anyway as their boss. Her message is “we are all mocked” by this man and his appointment as the boss of the household. This must be the feeling of the servants already, so that she can use it for her own ends. Her cry to them is well planned and rehearsed. This is no spur of the moment plan she is following here, but the result of many weeks thought about what to do if she can't get Joseph where she wants him. Having sowed the seed of the lie with all the male servants of her household, she lays Joseph's clothing aside until Potiphar comes home from the palace.

**Verses 17 – 19.** Potiphar does not hold any sort of inquiry into the truth of the allegations, but quickly decides to act on the basis of the evidence his wife gives him. This story is likely backed up by the other servants, but there is no “due process” or legal testing of evidence done here. Potiphar jumps to the wrong conclusion, thinking that Joseph has simply got too swollen headed with his great power in the house, something that his wife may have been feeding to him over the weeks also to prepare for this eventuality. Anger guides his actions rather than logic, just as lust guides his wife. Jeremiah 9:3-6.

**Verses 20 – 23.** This is no ordinary prison that Joseph was placed within, but the Pharaoh's personal prison. It's name gives us it's shape; it was called the “round house”. It was a circular prison with the most dangerous, or important people, in the centre, and that was where Joseph was “bound”. Moses makes it clear that Joseph is not in a pleasant place, and that he was restrained, and likely initially beaten daily. He is in a terrible situation and is without human hope. There is a tremendous challenge to faith here. Will he believe the Lord's promises or succumb to doubt and despair?

Moses quickly reminds us of what Joseph clung to and expressed his faith in; that the Lord God was with him. If the “Captain of the Guard” was Potiphar himself, then he would have enjoyed punishing Joseph for a time, but over time he sees that Joseph is responding in a totally different way to any other man who was guilty of such things as he is in jail for. There is something about the way Joseph handles himself in the prison and expresses his beliefs and behaves that moves upon the man in charge of the place.

The Lord moves upon Joseph and upon the keeper of the prison and Joseph finds grace in the sight of the man, and slowly things change in that place for Joseph. Moses does not give us time frames here for each segment of Joseph's life, but later he will tell us that Joseph was thirty when he is raised up to serve Pharaoh. Genesis 41:46. It may be that he was six years with Potiphar in the house and six or seven in jail; we simply don't know.

He was around seventeen when his brothers moved against him, and thirteen years pass before he is lifted up by Pharaoh to second ruler of the kingdom. It is his preparation for rulership, and just as in the house outside Joseph rules over every detail of prison life and the man in charge is able to relax. If it is Potiphar we can see why he does not release Joseph.

Firstly, he cannot be seen to accuse his wife of lying, nor admit he has wrongly imprisoned this man, and he also cannot do the work without him. It makes sense to keep Joseph locked up, but working for Egypt still. As a slave, it does not matter where he works, just as long as Potiphar is getting value for money. Also the injustice of locking him up, as he is a slave and can be treated any way the master wishes, makes all concepts of "injustice" irrelevant to Egyptian Law anyway. We end this section with Joseph still trapped in a humanly hopeless situation, and with him still working faithfully in all he is asked to do. He works as a slave and he does so faithfully. He sets us the best example of service and shows us how to prepare for greater service; by working hard in the area we find ourselves!

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. We may feel like slaves at times in the Lord's work, but that is because we are his slaves, just as Paul was. Paul delighted to call himself the "bond slave" of Christ. We are bought with the price of the precious blood of the Saviour and so are owned by the Lord, and so our time is his to apportion to whatever tasking he thinks fit. Let us be obedient to whatever the Lord calls us to, for it is in this that we will find our path of life and service and blessing, just as Joseph did.
2. Our idea of timing is not the same as the Lord's. Joseph's training to rule Egypt will take thirteen years, counting all time with Potiphar, both in his house and in the jail he controlled. Joseph had no idea when the time would be up, and yet he faithfully served day after day. He did get frustrated, as we will see, but he was patient over all and the Lord heard his prayers and the answer came in the right time for the plan. Just so it is with us. When the right time comes to make the next move the Lord opens the next door and not one second early. Let us be patient in this matter and pray away our frustrations rather than moan about what appears to be some delay. There are no delays in the Lord's plan.

Notes

## **CHAPTER 40**

### THE DREAMS OF THE MINISTERS OF EGYPT

In chapter 40 we have the high ministers called the baker and the butler who have been imprisoned as a result of a coup d'etat attempt while the Pharaoh determined who was guilty of the plot. The butler was the cup bearer who stood at the right hand of Pharaoh and was the equivalent of the minister of external affairs whilst the baker was the minister of internal affairs. They are named by their ceremonial duties, but were major cabinet ministers in the government.

In verses 5-8 both of these ministers have a dream and both are depressed about the content. These men have no eternal security, and no temporal security either as a result of the plot against Pharaoh. In verse 8 Joseph offers to interpret the dream with the Lord God being the source of the interpretation, and Joseph gives God the glory well before the interpretation comes. The interpretation of the dreams indicates that the cup bearer is due for release, but the internal affairs minister will be executed in three days as the guilty one.

Joseph however tries to use the circumstances to deliver himself from the prison by saying to the cup bearer to remember him when he is released. His message is a strong indication of his deep frustration; "I am an innocent man, when you are free and serving again, please arrange for me to be let go". He has tried to help God, and God doesn't need help to release him. He has also forgotten that he is a slave and will not be "let go", even if released from the jail.

He has three years yet to serve in his sentence but it is not for not trusting God, it is simply that this is the appointed time when the dreams of Pharaoh will occur.

God says to us all, as he did to Joseph, "I want you to trust only Me, and I will deliver you in my time, according to my plan, and it will be the right time". In God's time Joseph is going to get out. He does not need to ask an unbeliever for a favour. In God's time He will lift him up. 1 Peter 5:6-7. The hardest lesson to learn in this life is to leave yourself in the Lord's hands and trust His plan for you absolutely.

Be faithful with what He has given you to do, and do it with all your strength, and let the outcome and the timing be with Him. Do not play politics as a Christian. It is not God's will that you should advance spiritually by doing favours to men or by receiving favours from them. God will use believers and unbelievers to assist you, but leave the organizing of it in God's hands. As pastors of the Lord's flock, our job is to provide food for the sheep and cultivate the friendship of those who love God's Word and leave the working out of the plan to the author of it. God can be trusted; men cannot. - 2 Corinthians 12:9,10, 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:22; 1 Samuel 17:37.

Are you going to live with Joseph and Paul in faith or be in "panic palace" in a state of carnality? Whether you are in the prison or in the palace it does not matter, for you can have the fruit of the Spirit anywhere. Joseph lost nothing by waiting for three years. The Lord works out all things well. Walk in the Spirit not in the understanding of the human flesh. Proverbs 1:1-7, 2:1-22, 3:1-8. We simply do not know enough to make the right decisions – it is always better to find God's path and simply walk it. God's timing and God's provisions are always best – and his rewards are eternal.

**Proverbs 1:1-7.** 1. *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;*  
 2. *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;*  
 3. *To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;*  
 4. *To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.*  
 5. *A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:*  
 6. *To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.*  
 7. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge".*

**Proverbs 3:1-8.** 1. *"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:*  
 2. *For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.*  
 3. *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*  
 4. *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*  
 5. *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*  
 6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*  
 7. *Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.*  
 8. *It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."*

### **GENESIS 40:1-22**

**1** And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. **2** And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. **3** And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. **4** And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward. **5** And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. **6** And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon

them, and, behold, they were sad. 7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day? 8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you. 9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; 10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: 11 And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12 And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: 13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. 14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: 15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. 16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head: 17 And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. 18 And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days: 19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee. 20 And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: 22 But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."

## REFLECTION

**Verses 1 – 3.** Prison life has gone on for a number of years by this stage, for we know from verse one of chapter 41 that it is two full years later that the Chief Butler remembers the events of this chapter and Joseph is recalled from the prison to stand before Pharaoh. The challenge for Joseph is, not unlike our own, to remain constant in his daily work, even though the monotony of it must have taxed his ability to persevere. He needed to relax in faith-rest upon the promises of God; that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord would deliver him to stand before the king, and that all would bow to him one day, but that day was in the Lord's hands, not his.

There is a plot of some sort that threatens the Pharaoh. The ring leader is a person close to the Pharaoh and so he takes the two suspects and locks them away until he has questioned everyone and found out who it is in truth. In this day they didn't leave anyone who might be guilty free to plot and cover their tracks with crafty lawyers. Anyone suspected of evil was contained quickly until the truth was known; then the innocent was freed and the guilty died. As noted above, these men were more than tradesmen in the household, they were the trusted advisers to the Pharaoh, and they were in charge of serving his food and wine, and so were the most trusted, for poison was the normal way of eliminating kings in this day.

The two men are placed in the prison where Joseph also is "bound". This tells us that while Joseph is in charge of some aspects of prison life, he is still in chains daily, and the word's normal meaning indicates he was attached to a wall each night at least. He is tasked with being the servant of these two officials of Pharaoh. He becomes in effect their butler, steward, and cleaner while they are there. This underlines their status as cabinet ministers of Pharaoh, not just kitchen hands.

**Verses 4 – 6.** Dreams are used by the Lord to communicate warnings to people, and at rare times to bring comfort. God's special revelation is normally for warning and so the information conveyed is more often disturbing and worrying than encouraging. The scriptures are encouraging, so when the Lord speaks in a specific special way it is for warning more often than most.

Most dreams we have are not in this category of revelation at all, but are simply our own mind working things out that trouble it, but at specific times, to specific people, for specific purposes the Lord does use dreams to communicate. If a dream is a revelation of divine purpose, it will obey the laws that the Lord has given for revelation. It will always be specific, testable, proved true in time, godly in its purpose, and always will teach principles that are in accordance with scripture. No revelation of the Lord will ever lead people away from the Lord. Two good examples of dreams are in Daniel 2:1ff, 4:4-7.

**Verses 7 – 8.** These men are disturbed by their dreams, for they know that there is serious meaning behind them and that the meaning could be fatal to them. They know that the plot was real and that one of them is guilty of treason, but the guilty one, the "chief baker", is playing things very close to his chest and not letting on that he is the one. He will tell his dream second, as he hesitates, as guilty men do, to see the nature of Joseph's interpretation for the chief butler first.

Joseph makes it clear from the beginning that it is the Lord God who interprets dreams and to him alone belong the events of history. He steps out in faith and asks them to tell him the dream. He knows that God knows all things and if this is the door to his release then the Lord will give him the answer to the dreams immediately. Soothsayers and occult people are not ever needed; the words of the living God are all that is required. Psalms 25:14, Isaiah 8:19, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

This is a step of faith, not a leap, for the Lord has prepared this man through his own dreams to see that the Lord is doing something with him, and so he sees the arrival of these two men as the potential open door to the fulfilment of his own dream. Joseph is looking for the Lord's next move to bring him through to his manifest destiny and sees this event as a part of the divine plan. He is "hungry" for the Lord's path and so steps out to place himself where the Lord can use him. He takes a risk here, but he is prepared for this by the Lord's revelation to him.

**Verses 9 – 11.** The role of the cup bearer is here described. In the Pharaoh's presence he would squeeze the grapes and deliver the freshly prepared grape juice directly to his master. The butler sees a grape vine with three great ripe clusters of grapes and he takes them presses them directly into pharaoh's cup, that he holds, and delivers the fresh juice to Pharaoh. Having told the dream he waits anxiously for Joseph to speak the meaning to him.

**Verses 12 – 15.** Joseph immediately receives the interpretation of the dream from the Lord and gives it to the chief butler. He will be restored to his post, thoroughly exonerated from guilt in the plot and all this will happen within three days.

Joseph then adds what we would call his "hard luck story". Now everything Joseph says is true, but it is irrelevant to the chief butler who doesn't care about where Joseph is from or why he is there in jail. His telling of the story is also irrelevant to the Lord's plan for Joseph's life, for his life is in the Lord's hands, and God needs no help from the gratefulness of the chief butler to deliver Joseph. The butler will remember Joseph at the right time; Joseph's challenge is to relax in God's timing and serve the Lord until he is released, and then serve him where ever he is sent at that point. 1 Corinthians 7:20-24.

Notice Joseph's words however. He has been deeply feeling the injustice of his slavery and his jailing. He is normal in this and is not judged by God for this outburst of self pity, for it is understandable. I had, in previous study of this passage early in my ministry blamed Joseph for these words and said that he has two further years added to his sentence from the Lord because of his request to the chief butler here.

On further mature reflection I believe now I was wrong in that earlier statement. Joseph does not add anything to his sentence here, for the time frame of the Lord is established in eternity past, and he will be released at exactly the right time to answer the dream of Pharaoh which is two years away at this point. His words will be remembered by the chief butler at exactly the right time for Joseph to begin saving Egypt from the famine that is at this point over nine years away. Joseph has still some things to learn however; the main one being, that he is here upon the earth to be the Lord's servant, and he will be a slave to the Lord's will all his life. He will relax with this over the next two years and be ready for Pharaoh's dream.

**Verses 16 – 19.** The chief baker now draws up his courage to tell his dream. He has been up to no good and his dream indicates this. He only speaks once he sees that the interpretation for the other man was good. He hopes to escape as guilty men often do, believing he has hidden the evidence of his wrong doing so well that it will not be uncovered.

His dream pictures him doing his ceremonial work, walking towards the Pharaoh's house with three baskets of bread upon his head; all sort of bread in the baskets, but the birds come and eat the lot as he walks. The dream has the same structure and Joseph does not hesitate with the answer. The three baskets are also three days and he too will have his head lifted up, but not in honour, but in execution. He will be executed in three days for his crimes. His judgment is upon his own head; for he is the author of his own misfortune. Leviticus 20:11ff.

**Verses 20 – 23.** Three days from this point it was Pharaoh's birthday and he threw a big party to celebrate. It was a double celebration, for he had also discovered the truth about the plot and so the butler was forgiven and restored to his post, while the baker was executed that very day. It was all as Joseph had told in advance. The chief butler is restored to service and immediately forgets Joseph completely. Why is this?

Those of you who read this may have examples of this from your own lives. When a favour is done to a person it is not uncommon for the person who has received the great favour to forget the one who blessed them, and only recall it much later. It is in the nature of man to rejoice in their own deliverance so much that they forget the one who delivered them! As believers in the Lord, and as ones who have learned to trust and walk close to the Lord upon his path, we can relax in such situations.

I chuckled to myself as I wrote these words, for I have in my professional work delivered two men from great distress and major financial and personal catastrophe. In each case they were unable to pay my professional fee in the process but solemnly promised to pay when the court cases were won and the money to pay me was freed up. Both were apparently believers in the Lord. Both court cases were won, and I played a key role in each. Neither did pay in the end and have not to date of writing this.

One man owed \$2500-00, for three years work, the other \$10,500-00, for over ten years support through great injustice that the man faced in the courts. Both men were delivered by the Lord in the process and I rejoice that the Lord used me to assist them. In the second case I had dedicated all my earnings to missions early in the process and so the man has robbed the mission rather than me. In both cases I have relaxed in the Lord's provision for me and my family and trusted

that the Lord will yet deliver these men into honesty and integrity, as he used me to deliver them into a new life with hope for both in place of despair. I understand Joseph's feelings in this matter.

### PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. In God's time we will be delivered from the troubles that beset us, and that deliverance will be perfect and the timing will be perfect in order that the plan of God, from eternity past, will be fulfilled in our life. We have absolute security in this, for the plan will work out for us. All we have to do is be obedient to the required steps we are to follow. Joseph will not be delayed in his release, for the Lord's plan calls for Pharaoh's dream to occur first.
2. To walk in faith, means that we live in a state where the promises of God are seen as more real than all the distractions and viewpoints of man. The Lord calls us to manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit in prison or in the palace. The challenge is to obey the Lord, feed deeply upon his Word and apply it with vigour into the fabric of daily life wherever the Lord has led us, and wait until the Lord opens doors.
3. Special revelation is exactly that "special". It does not happen all the time, for it does not need to, and if it does then the person needs to be "very scared" for it normally means something very important and potentially very scary is coming! Dreams may be used by the Lord but they will involve warnings, and when the Lord is behind it there will be very specific markers as to the meaning of the dream, and the content will always be godly, in accord with scripture, and it's truth will be testable. Anything not in accord with these principles is **not** of the Lord, but is simply a natural phenomenon.
4. Joseph steps out in faith regarding the interpretation of the dreams, but he does so on the basis of good experiences that have prepared him for this. He does not claim this skill from his own strength, but gives the Lord credit in advance and steps out in faith to walk through whatever door the Lord has opened through these two men.

Let us be sure we are alert to what the Lord may be doing in the meetings we have through each day. Let us be looking for the Lord's will in each meeting and situation, so that we can be guided. When we step out in faith we know that the Lord will answer our need, for it is his path we walk, and unless you have that certainty, do not move forward, for it isn't faith, it is clearly foolishness unless there is truth and certainty!

5. When we face injustice and people abuse us or financially misuse us, then we need to claim the Lord's justice and wait for the Lord to deal with the problem. The Lord does not need our vengeance type activities; when we are abused by another, we are to pass them over to the Lord and he will deal with them far better than we would. Some important verses on vengeance are here. Deuteronomy 32:35, Psalms 94:1, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30.

### NOTES

## CHAPTER 41

### INTRODUCTION

When you look at this part of Genesis as a whole it is clear that God's training program for Joseph ranged over a 12 - 13 year period, as he was sold into slavery at the age of 17 or so, and he became second ruler of Egypt at the age of 30. He therefore spent possibly as many as 5-9 years working for Potiphar and the balance in jail learning to trust God not men. His jail term involved at least one or two years prior to meeting the ministers and two years after. He is in God's Plan, and that means God's timing in all matters.

God had a plan for Joseph, and that plan was going to work out for him. From the experience of Joseph and many others we get promises from the Old Testament writers reminding us that the Lord will not leave us nor forsake us. 1 Kings 8:57, Joshua 1:5, Psalms 96:1-6. God is not waiting for Joseph, for there is time, and he has things to learn. He asked the cup bearer to remember him, but the cup bearer had amnesia and was shown not to be dependable. God however is dependable and Joseph learns that God's timing is perfect. He was in jail a further two whole years but all this means is that he is there ready to be called when the real need exists.

### PHARAOH'S DREAMS

God now gave Pharaoh a double and very weird couple of dreams; seven fat cattle being consumed by seven thin cattle, and seven ears of full corn being consumed by seven ears of withered corn. This is going to be the once in a lifetime opportunity to share in the work of God for Joseph, and he is ready, willing and waiting upon the Lord in jail. God is active at all periods of history and is doing things in the world. The only question for us is, will we participate in the plan of God or will we be distracted by the details of life, and so miss the key events that we are meant to be partakers of? Many believers do not know the blessing of God in their lives because of lack of participation with the Lord, simply because they are too busy hustling on their own plan to find out what God is doing and be part of his plan for them.

These dreams are going to radically change Joseph's life. Pharaoh understood that they were dreams with prophetic meaning and that he needed help to interpret them and act upon them. When dawn breaks he calls in his wise men, but these are men associated with the occult; with the corrupt religion of the gods of Egypt. These people were skilled at interpreting things that were difficult to understand and they had extensive knowledge of science and magic arts. In this case however none of them are able to understand and interpret the dream, for the Lord has blocked them, and eliminated their powers. The occult is not to be played with, but nor is it to be feared by any true believer, for greater is he in us that he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4.

### SATANIC MANIFESTATIONS

In verse eight we see that Satan is in the business of signs and wonders and he has his magicians and wise men. Psalm 96:5 tells us that the gods of the nations are demons; that they have power, power that comes from Satan. There are healings, levitations, prophecies and speaking in tongues in many of the pagan religions. Satan gives genuine signs and manifests genuine power, but these are always inferior to that able to be shown by the Holy Spirit when it is appropriate.

The Sufi mystics of Iran and the Voodoo people of the Caribbean speak in tongues. Speaking in strange tongues together with healing is being performed by Satanists all around the world. Signs and wonders are therefore not necessarily of God. Always check the "FRUIT" of their lives – and you will see the source of their power.

A member of my church as a young man was a China Inland Mission missionary, Hayden Melsop, who was a missionary in China from the 1920s to the 1940s, reported to me that he saw a group of Buddhist monks sitting in a circle meditating and praying. All of a sudden the circle of monks levitated a metre or so above the ground, rotated in a complete circle and returned to the circle seated. The levitation and power demonstrated was real but Satanic in origin. He, like many missionaries had also seen dramatic healings in satanic power. We are reminded by history that dramatic signs are no indication of God's presence; holiness and the fruits of the Spirit alone are the sign of God's presence.

It is the fruit of the Spirit which is critical to identify the presence of God, not spiritual gifts alone, because the gifts can be counterfeited by Satan. While the cults have power God sets limits to the powers exercised by Satanic agents, and they are easily spotted by those using biblical doctrine as their tests. Matthew 7:13-23.

Satan provides problems to people in his evil and malice, and then provides a person or system to genuinely solve the problem he has created. He is able to do genuine miracles but they are from the wrong side and will give credence to Satan's people and their belief systems. We need discernment in this present world, for the enemy is very devious and deceives many.

We are involved in the angelic conflict and in spiritual warfare now, but the most intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict is yet to come. We are on the winning side, and are safe if we relax in "faith-rest" and do what is required of us, in the filling of the Holy Spirit, but the other side has got power and we should not forget it. In 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12 we are clearly warned that many dramatic "lying wonders" will be seen to happen in the Great Tribulation. People who have rejected the Gospel will accept these things done then and follow the one working these miracles. Because they have rejected the truth about God, they will be deceived by the lies of the enemy; they will accept what they see from Satan. In

this time period God is allowing evil to have its full sway but in the end God is always in control, for he is the creator of space and time.

If you come up against evil with power you can be assured that you are in the Lord's hands then, just as you are in calmer and apparently safer times. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. 1 John 4:4. These times are when you need to know Bible doctrine and claim the principles of truth that will be your sword and shield. God has got a wall of fire around all believers. Satan is a defeated foe. You can claim God's protection even if the power of apparent evil is great and visible. In faith, see the greatness of God's power and rejoice in any adversity and pressure.

#### INTERPRETING PHARAOH'S DREAM

After two years of amnesia the chief butler suddenly remembers Joseph in jail and recounts to Pharaoh what happened when he was in jail under suspicion of being involved in an attempted coup d'etat. He gives Pharaoh just what Pharaoh needs to know at the right time for Joseph to emerge as the man to lead them. Joseph's release at any time before this would not have achieved the result the Lord wants. We are apparently "trapped" in situations at times, yet the Lord leaves us in them for his purposes, so that he can achieve his will at the right time in accordance with the requirements of the plan.

Joseph will be strong and direct in his answers to Pharaoh; there is no waffling with this man. Many Christians take so long getting to the point when asked a question, that people forget what the original question was. When you have the answer, and are called to give it, give the answer with as little extra material as possible. Give them the facts and a challenge which is, "this is the one, believe on Him". Witnessing is not telling people about yourself, it is telling them about Christ, the person who is going to solve their problems.

#### RELEASE OF JOSEPH

In verse 14 the Pharaoh calls for Joseph out of the dungeon, and so Joseph washes himself, shaves his head and clothes himself before he goes to Pharaoh. Joseph has good manners, he has been in jail for at least three to four years now and was therefore unhygienic as he emerged from confinement. He knows Egyptian culture and cleanliness was next to godliness for them. It ought to be that way for us also. Believers ought to be clean and tidy, and dressed appropriate to the places we are going, so that our appearance is never an issue. We are meant to be people who don't get in the way of the Lord's message by our poor dress, unclean habits, or weird or inappropriate clothing.

Many Christians rush into situations without proper preparation and wonder why their witnessing is not successful. Do not rush in the Lord's service, he has called you to serve, and there is to be no mindless rush or arrogant delay; make sure you are at your best when you are talking to the people about the Lord. Make sure you look like the herald of the King of Kings. The Lord's work does not require haste or panic it requires thoughtfulness and preparation. Joseph will "run" to meet Pharaoh, but he will be dressed, clean and ready. The Lord has given Joseph all the lessons he needs, now he must look in the mirror and prepare to meet the King.

In verse 15 Pharaoh is laying a trap for Joseph, in that he is going to give Joseph anything that he wants in return for information. The temptation for Joseph to sin is going to be quite strong as he can claim the interpretation of the dream comes from him rather than God. Joseph however makes it clear from the beginning that God will answer the dreams and he asks for nothing from Pharaoh.

Pharaoh tells Joseph the dream who then tells him that the two dreams are one. He tells Pharaoh that the dreams were from God, and that they are prophetic in nature. He noted that the dreams were doubled and therefore reinforced [v 30]. If a doctrine or principle is stated once in the Bible we should get it and if it is doubled or triples it is vital we devote all attention to that principle.

Pharaoh now asks what should be done and Joseph suggests that he should look for someone quiet, wise and careful, and set him over the land of Egypt. A percentage of the crops should be taken and set aside for the lean years. Joseph is the obvious choice for the job but he leaves it in the Lord's hands. Joseph gives Pharaoh the right advice and leaves him in the Lord's hand for Pharaoh to decide who the new prime minister is to be. There was a possibility that he could have gone back into prison.

Do not offer yourself for great work, let the Lord lift you up. 1 Peter 5:5-7. This will be important after any obedience to any demand the Lord makes of you. At the end of the course the Lord has asked you to complete, once you have your diploma or objective, you cast your "guidance burden" on the Lord and leave it there. He will then guide you to the next task. Let the Lord raise you up and provide for you in his prepared place in the divine plan for your life.

In verse v 41 Joseph becomes the prime minister of Egypt, he is a prisoner in the morning but by afternoon there is only one man higher in the kingdom than him. Pharaoh retires and perhaps builds a pyramid for himself and leaves everything in Joseph's hands. He takes off his ring which is the equivalent of a cheque book or credit card, and hands it to Joseph, and puts the gold chain of office around his neck and gave him a chariot. I wonder who his Palace Guard captain was? I suspect it wasn't Potiphar, although it may still have been!

Joseph was carried through the streets of Egypt and everybody bowed before him because of his new status. He gets a beautiful woman as his bride and they have two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. He was also given an Egyptian name

which meant the “Saviour of the land” or, “the one who tells secrets”. At 30 he is the leader of the nation having been in training for 13 very tough years. Very few people are saved and serving mightily in a year or two. It requires training and it takes time. The Lord can use you if like Joseph you are willing to learn and are not prepared to take short cuts.

In verses 50-53 the two sons become the two half tribes of Israel and represent the double portion of blessing that he receives. Manasseh means “forgetting”. He forgave and forgot the injustice that had been dealt out to him. He was not petty. His first act as ruler was not to send a hit squad around to Potiphar's house or to go and declare war on Palestine. He does not hold a grudge; he forgets the past and serves God in the present, which is one of the signs of greatness.

Winston Churchill said, “In war – resolution, in defeat – defiance, in victory – magnanimity, in peace – goodwill.” It is that philosophy that guides all who walk with Jesus. Paul sums this up for us in Philippians 3:13-14 - we must forget the past, look to the future, deal with our problems and walk with God. Our focus is always to be forwards. We look backwards only to the Cross and the empty tomb, and then recharged by God's grace, we press forward. We cannot change our mistakes of the past, we can only grow away from them.

**Philippians 3:12-15.** *“12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

*13. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,*

*14. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

*15. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”*

Ephraim means “blessing or production”. God's blessing is on Joseph and on every believer who like Joseph trusts in Him alone. Blessing is yours if you claim doctrine and do not panic in situations that are overwhelming, as you claim his power rather than your own. God will not intrude into your life but he is there to solve your problems. The fruit of the Spirit is the critical thing. To please God we must walk as Joseph walked, as only then will we fulfill our destiny God's way, in the Holy Spirit's infilling power.

**Ephesians 5:14-18.** *“14. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*

*15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

*16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

*17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

*18. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”*

Paul was not a millionaire but God was with him, and when God is with us, we need no other thing, for he will provide all our needs to achieve his goals for our life. As the Lord's pastors we are to challenge the Lord's congregation as to how they are walking. Are they going to be like Joseph, his brothers, or Potiphar's wife? We decide daily how we will be by our decisions, for the Word or for the world, for godliness or carnality, for faith or human reasoning!

### **GENESIS 41:1-24**

**“1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fat fleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and lean fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill favoured and lean fleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. 9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: 10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: 11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12 And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. 13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. 14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. 17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat fleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: 23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin,**

**and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 24 And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.”**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 4.** Moses makes the time frame here very clear. It is two full years after the activity described in the previous section. Joseph has had to return to the hum drum of prison life, without any assurance that things will change for him, and with the certainty that his words to the chief butler have been useless. When he does remember, it will be at the right time for Joseph to fulfil his part in God's plan for his life. God's timing is always perfect, but we don't see this, except when we look back. Faith is looking around and forward with the certainty now that we will have later when we look back. Hebrews 11:1. God's Word is to be more true and powerful than our fears and worries.

At the end of the waiting period Pharaoh has his dream, at exactly the right time to tie in with the fourteen years of crop variation that is to come. He dreams a strange dream, where herbivores become carnivores, and where grains are personified and eat one another. Read the description Moses gives here and see what Pharaoh saw. He knew that the weirdness and yet clarity of this dream put it out of the category of the result of a weird thing he has eaten! He is intelligent, and knows that most dreams are our tangled inner mind working through data in a Salvador Dali way! Most dreams have no significance at all and are often weird. This was however, clearly a dream with significance, but he had no idea of what that significance might be.

The dream occurs unbidden, without anything happening in his life that it could refer to. He is staggered at it, for he knows from it's content and structure that this has meaning for his land and himself. He sees himself standing by the River Nile, and as the river defined Egypt, it was the fate of Egypt that was at stake here and Pharaoh knows it.

He sees seven fat cows come out of the river, and they feed in the pasture beside the river and the scene is one of great prosperity and calm. The animals are fat and healthy and the whole picture is one of domestic tranquillity; all is well in the kingdom of the Nile. Then as he watches, seven other cows come up out of the river, but they are famine animals; they are lean, hungry and ill looking.

The Nile was Egypt, and it's prosperity as a nation depended upon the yearly floods of the river Nile bringing the life giving fertilizer of the soils of Africa down to cover it's fields. Whatever is going to happen is going to come from the river itself. It is a famine, caused by the failure of the rains in all the areas of the Middle East and the African continent itself.

It may be that this period of seven years drought sets the stage for the first major advance of the Sahara to cover the fertile lands of Sub-Saharan Africa. The Sahara was not a large desert at this time, and the vast area now covered with sand supported thousands of pastoral and agricultural communities at this time 2000 BC. The river will be starved of water, for none or little rain will fall in Central and North Eastern Africa for seven years, and so the Nile floods will not occur as they need to for the prosperity of Egypt.

Initially the seven lean cows just stand along the river bank with the seven fat and healthy cows. It is as if they know that their fate is being sealed by the river miles up stream in Africa. They stand together by the river, and then a weird and scary thing happens. The lean animals eat the fat and healthy ones until there are only the lean ones left. Pharaoh awakes, and I suspect was in shock at what he had seen. For a cow to eat another cow was an unheard of thing. The cow was sacred to the Egyptians and this was a violation of their theology and against nature itself.

**Verses 5 – 7.** The second dream occurs immediately he falls back to sleep from the first one and it mirrors it in the kingdom of the crops, as the cows did in the kingdom of domestic animals. There was a species of Egyptian wheat that in the best years bore seven ears at the top of a heavy pithy stem, of considerable weight in grain. It is this wheat that the Pharaoh sees and he sees seven ears on the stem, a sign of greatest abundance.

He then sees another stem of wheat come out of the ground, but it is blasted by the desert wind and carries no grain at all in the seven seed pods at the top. It is apparently dead, dry or deformed by the hot wind. Then another weird thing, the blasted wheat eats the good wheat and devours it all. Grain like this was the staple crop of Egypt, and it's main export, but also it was used in the service of the gods and religious worship to speak of the god's prosperity, brought to Egypt by the Nile. Pharaoh awakes and sees that it was a dream, but knows it is a dream of warning and of coming doom.

**Verses 8 – 9.** Pharaoh waits until morning, probably thinking over the dream and trying to think of it's significance, but he is unable to think of what it might mean. As the dawn breaks he calls all the men who understand magic, all the theologians and all the leaders of the universities of the day; all the wise men gather. He tells them the dream and asks them to interpret it, but they all fail to make sense of it. Now the penalty for misleading Pharaoh was death, and in Egypt they were wise enough to require the ability to falsify the interpretation as a test for all truth, so the weird dream interpreters of today would have been executed on the spot as charlatans.

The Lord silences all the men who would otherwise have given their thoughts, for all these men know that whatever the dream means it spells doom for their nation and none are keen to say that aloud. It was death to speak a word against the river or the land, for they were sacred also. The wise men of the land are caught by the theological short comings of their own religion and cannot answer their pharaoh. The question is, who knows someone with a track record of God showing him the interpretation of important dreams? Who can think of a man who will speak a word against Egypt, the

Nile and the prosperity of the land – a treasonable offence at that time? At the point where everyone is looking steadily into the ground the chief butler, under the Holy Spirit's conviction, remembers Joseph and his ability to tell him and the doomed Baker the truth about dreams, without fear or favour. Psalms 105:16-22.

**Verses 10 – 13.** The Chief Butler now reveals to Pharaoh the details of Joseph's proven ability. Notice again his economy of words and his "to the point" information. There is never any room for flowery language and long speaking with the Egyptian Court of this day. Matthew 5:33-37, 6:7-8. In many cultures the way a thing is said sets a man apart as a "noble", and noble speech is long winded and flowery, filled with stories and analogies, to such an extent that the truth itself is often lost. We are not to follow such patterns, but we are to speak plainly and directly, with the truth stated in the clearest way for all to grasp it.

His key points are; we were in jail because of an offence committed by the chief baker, and in jail we both had separate dreams, each his own. We met there this man. He was a "Hebrew" – a man of Canaan but from further north – a man who "crossed the river Euphrates" – not a local Canaanite. He was a slave or servant to the Captain of the Guard, the Chief of the Prison. He interpreted the dreams of each of us accurately. He predicted my restoration to my place of service, and the chief baker's execution. Pharaoh now has all he needs to know. This man is a slave in the household of his minister, he is from the Mesopotamian area, and he accurately has the ability to interpret dreams, and he will tell the truth even if the person who asks for information is to be told he will die! It is this dependability that we will give truth even to death that the world needs to know of us.

**Verses 14 – 15.** Pharaoh orders his immediate release and his presence before him. Joseph is speedily brought out of the prison (literally – they make him run/move quickly – but all was still done carefully to ready him for his audience), and so he was bathed and cleaned up, his head is shaved in the manner of the Egyptian nobility and he is dressed appropriately to meet the Pharaoh.

All this must have been done in Potiphar's (or his replacement's) house, as he was the master of the prison and had the responsibility to follow any release orders from Pharaoh. The clothing Joseph wears is likely provided by the very man who jailed him for attempted rape upon his wife. It is a reminder to us to leave our case in the Lord's hands for his uplifting of us, for when he restores us he will do so in blessing and honour forever. 1 Peter 5:5-9.

**Psalms 113:2-8.** *"2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.  
3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised.  
4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.  
5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,  
6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!  
7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;  
8 That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."*

**Verses 16 – 17.** Joseph is quick to identify the source of any power he has; that the Lord God alone is the one who interprets dreams and makes it clear that he is the Lord's servant in his work and will take no credit to himself for the interpretation given. The way Pharaoh asks Joseph to interpret the dream is a spiritual test for Joseph, and he passes it easily, for his years of jail have taught him that the Lord alone is his strength and Saviour. Moses and all the saints through history realize this, and the strength of the Lord is their confidence, not any giftedness they have themselves. Exodus 15:2, 1 Samuel 2:9, 2 Samuel 22:33, Nehemiah 8:10, Psalms 18:32, 27:1, 28:2, 33:16, 46:1, 62:7, Proverbs 10:29, Isaiah 12:2, Jeremiah 16:19, Habakkuk 3:19.

Joseph tells Pharaoh that the answer of the Lord to his dreams will be a source of "peace". By saying this he is resting in the provision of the Lord for the nation and his own safety. To speak against the land of Egypt was to speak death. It may be this that hindered the "wise men" speaking in the first place! Praise God that Satan's religious systems are all flawed at their core and cannot stand against the Spirit of Truth. John 8:12, 31-32, 10:7-11, 14:6. Joseph urges Pharaoh to see from the outset, that if the Lord has given him a dream and Joseph an interpretation of it, then it is to save the land not destroy it that the dream has come. There is good here, not judgment, but only if they obey the One Lord God and follow the instruction of his servant. Romans 8:28.

**Verses 18 – 24.** Pharaoh now retells the story and adds in some details that were not told first time. He notes this time that the seven cows who eat the first seven do not gain weight by the eating of the others, but are still as lean and ill as they were before. He is genuinely baffled by the dream and worried about it's meaning for Egypt. He then makes the point that brings all the worried men in the room into focus; he has already told all the wise men of Egypt in that room and they have been unable to interpret anything about this. The pressure is on Joseph and he has every eye in the room upon him now.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. God's timing for events is his timing, not ours! It is the plan of the Lord that we are following not our own. Joseph is waiting in jail for an event to set him free and lift him up to the place his own dreams thirteen years before indicated would be his fate. He has learned faith in this time and trusts that the Lord will lift him up in his own time. When the order comes it comes with urgency; Joseph is expected to spring into action and leap to his feet and run to prepare for his meeting with Pharaoh. We always "wait" actively, and ready ourselves to move.

Many years of our lives may appear to be empty of significance, yet they are preparation times. We are to maintain our fitness and health, ready for the call of the Lord, and ready to answer the call when it comes. Many believers become fat, lazy, unfit and slack in their body, their prayer life, and Bible study, while they wait for the Lord's answer to their prayers. If we are waiting, we are to maintain "battle fitness" throughout that time period, and that means we are to be physically fit, stay as healthy in our eating as possible, and be prayerful and study and apply the Word daily. While we live there is still great work to do! Let us be always ready.

2. Faith is defined as the belief in the certainty of the Lord's plan working out, expressed in daily actions that are based upon the reality of the fulfilled plan, before it is seen in time. Faith sees the answers to prayers before the eyes see them. That is the faith rest life to which we are called; to see the plan of God as complete in our life, even though it won't be seen for a number of years by others. We are to work in assurance of it's completion, and in everything we do we are to express our confidence in the success of what the Lord is doing with us.
3. When God moves through us, he moves all those who would oppose his work out of the way. Joseph needed a clear run to explain the dreams and he gets that by the silencing of the wise men before he is asked to speak. Joseph knows that he has not asked to be before Pharaoh, and so he can relax and know that the Lord will give him all he needs at the time of his appearance before the man.

**Matthew 10:18-20.**        *"18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.  
19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.  
20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."*

**GENESIS 41:25-57**

**"25** And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. **26** The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. **27** And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. **28** This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. **29** Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: **30** And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; **31** And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. **32** And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. **33** Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. **35** And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. **36** And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. **37** And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. **38** And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? **39** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: **40** Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. **41** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. **42** And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; **43** And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. **44** And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. **45** And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. **46** And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. **47** And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. **48** And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. **49** And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. **50** And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. **51** And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. **52** And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. **53** And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. **54** And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. **55** And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. **56** And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. **57** And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."

## REFLECTION

**Verses 25 – 32.** Joseph cuts straight to the meaning of the dreams. He does not pause, ask for time, but speaks exactly what the Lord tells him as he begins to speak. It is a biblical example of the principle stated by the Lord in Matthew 10:19-20. The Lord gives him accuracy and he gives God the glory throughout the telling of the meaning of the dreams.

The dream is one, he tells Pharaoh straight away. There are not two things being communicated here, but one thing and it is for Egypt's survival and the thing shown is about to start to happen. There is urgency to apply this knowledge and do something quickly about what the Lord God has revealed. The doubling of the dream tells the Pharaoh that the thing coming is certain and not to be changed by prayers or sacrifices made for deliverance from it, for the only deliverance will come "through it". There are things that we need to walk through, and that the Lord will not deliver us from experiencing, but his promise is that he is there with us in the midst of the pressure situation. Psalms 23:4-6, Matthew 28:20. We must distinguish between things to be prayed away and things to be prayed through in this life!

The seven cows and seven ears of corn on the stalk are also one thing; they are seven good years of productivity in the pastoral and agricultural sectors. There will be great prosperity for seven years, and then the seven sick cows and the seven blasted ears of wheat are also one thing; they are the seven following years of famine. Joseph repeats that he is interpreting what "God is about to do to the land of Egypt". With divine warning there is hope, as long as the divine warning is heeded. We see this also in the book of Revelation, where if warnings are heeded, people live to see Jesus.

It is the Lord who moves in history and he is about to do something that has not been seen before, for seven bumper years to be followed by seven famine years. Without preparation the land will be desolated and the people will die. Two or three years will bring starvation but seven years of drought will bring national catastrophe. There is no escape from the ecological disaster that is certainly coming, but with preparation the people and the animals will live.

**Verses 33 – 36.** Having given the meaning of the dreams, Joseph sees that Pharaoh is sitting wanting more, so he gives him the answer to the problem that the dreams have made clear are coming. The Lord gives Joseph the wisdom to give this solution, just as he has given him the interpretation. Joseph is confident because he is walking close to the Lord and hears the Spirit minister within his head. This is what today some call the "word of Knowledge" following Paul. Romans 11:33-36, 1 Corinthians 2:15-16, 12:8, 13:2.

It is a relaxing thing to receive this communication from the Lord. In my counselling work I experience this sort of thing often, and am able to say things to a person about their thoughts and worries that they have not yet shared with me, and in minutes we get to places where others take hours to get to if they get there at all. It is simply the moving of the Holy Spirit, and is not to be asked for nor feared. It is simply something that happens to those who walk as God tells them and are doing a God given task and need this special knowledge to achieve the task. As prepared servants of the Lord we are to relax and serve and then we know the things that need to be know.

Joseph identifies the right ratio of the crop that needs to be set aside to have plenty for all the animals and people for at least seven years. It is not half, a quarter, or a seventh, but a fifth of the bumper crops, for this will provide enough for sale, and allows for wastage as a result of storage, and given the bounty of the seven good years there will be enough to sow again, in faith in the eighth year.

The supply will probably be constantly re-circulated, so that after seven years of storage the oldest wheat will be the first distributed. Joseph is sure that he has enough to feed all the people and selected stock animals for seven years with a percentage on top for sale to other nations. He knows that there must be a specifically established bureaucracy to run this, for existing structures will be required for existing work. As Mordecai says, "for such a time as this!"

This organization needs to be under Pharaoh's direct command with a man responsible to him alone in charge of daily operations. No other management structure is needed, as the possibility of fraud and corruption is always too high if a standard bureaucracy is used for such a project. This is a special project and needs a special project team with its own store houses and guards to make sure it works and direct responsibility to Pharaoh to make sure it is kept honest.

**Verses 37 – 40.** Pharaoh gives his verdict immediately on the suggestions Joseph has made and asks his court whether anyone can think of a better candidate to apply the things that Joseph has advised. Notice that the Pharaoh is clear that it is a godly man who he seeks, a man who walks with God and hears the Lord's voice. He faces a supernatural challenge and a man who is in tune with the supernatural is the minimal standard for success in such a time. Daniel 4:6, 8, 18, 5:11, 14, 6:3. If this is not well handled there will be national chaos, revolution and disaster.

Our job is to position ourselves in the place where we are habitually in the place where God works through us and speaks with us, for then we are ready to serve at any level in the plan. Pharaoh recognizes that it is God who has given this man all that he needs to understand. He sees that in Joseph there is a man who listens to God, and this is the man who he wants, for he knows that this man has integrity, and also is intelligent without arrogance. He is not a man who will plot against him, for he sees that Joseph fears God alone, and has honour towards the Pharaoh as God's man, appointed by God. Joseph's treatment of the Pharaoh has told him that he recognizes that God has spoken to Pharaoh through the dreams, and that as he serves God so he will serve the one who God gave the dreams.

Joseph is placed over the household affairs of the Pharaoh himself; in effect he is now Chief of State; the second most powerful man in the kingdom. He is placed there publicly before all the cabinet of the Pharaoh, and all have seen why he is there. They have seen that he is a man of God, who can interpret dreams, and only God gives such a gifting. Joseph is now recognized as a spiritual leader in the nation, as well as a political ruler. He is publicly recognized as the second ruler, only Pharaoh himself is exempt from his jurisdiction as he sits on the throne. Joseph is given the greatest power that a common man was capable of wielding in the entire ancient world of his day. He has been obedient to the Lord for many years now, and so all men in Egypt will be obedient to him. Psalms 2:10-12.

**Verses 41 – 44.** The pharaoh then formally repeats the role and status he has given Joseph in front of all his court. He is placed over all Egypt. He is second only to the Pharaoh and acts with his authority. He is given publicly Pharaoh's own ring as the authority symbol over finances, and then has the royal chain of office given to him, the symbol of his office as the chief of state, bearing all the symbols of power over Egypt. He is given the second chariot of the Pharaoh himself.

When people see him coming they will think it is Pharaoh himself, and they are right, in that Joseph has all of Pharaoh's power. He is given a new set of clothes, not just aristocratic but royal clothing of the finest linen. When ever he went out there were men going before him calling on all to prostrate themselves before Joseph as the ruler of the nation. Pharaoh then reminds Joseph that without Pharaoh's power no one was entitled to do anything in the land, and that this power is now Joseph's to wield. A man is able to wield great power without arrogance, if he himself is already under the power of God, for such a man will not be led astray by the power, for they are stabilized in the one who has absolute power over all things. Philippians 2:5-16. This passage from Paul's letter to Philippi is a good one to reflect upon in light of Joseph's experiences here.

**Verses 45 – 52.** Joseph is given an Egyptian name fit for rulership of the kingdom. It is Zaphnath-Paaneah, although this is its Hebrew form. Its Egyptian form is thought to be, P-sote-M-Ph-eneh. It was a normal thing to receive a new name for a new phase in life, or after a life changing experience. We have seen this with Abram (to Abraham), and Jacob (to Israel). This name is however particularly Egyptian. It's significance is to be grasped, for it's meaning is, "supporter or sustainer of life by a call entrusted to him by God".

His name therefore becomes his title, the one who saves, because of the work God has called him to. His name becomes an expression of faith and confidence for the nation as it goes into the famine. His very name is a doctrinal statement; God is delivering us through this man. They know Joseph is a true prophet, for he has been right in the seven years of plenty and they now know that there will be seven years of famine and then it will be over.

He is married to Asenath, the daughter of the High Priest of the land. This match would recognize that Joseph was a prophet and God spoke directly to him, so the right match would be from the highest religious family of the land. This is not a sign of religious compromise on Joseph's part. He has one wife and she bears two of the ancestors of the Jewish peoples, for from these two people come the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The meaning of her name is possibly, "consecrated to the Sun".

Joseph is acknowledged as a man who God speaks to directly; this was unheard of in Egypt and so he is well above the priests of the sun god in status, recognized by them as a holy man. I believe on the basis of all that was later written about Joseph that he maintained his faith and led his wife to the Lord. It may be from Joseph's belief system that the worship of the one God enters Egyptian thought and possibly this is the source of the later Egyptian religious conflicts when Akhenaton brings in monotheism for a time to Egypt.

Joseph then begins a grand tour of the entire land of Egypt to identify the sites for building the granaries and the people in each place who will be directed to collect the grain from every grower, care for it properly, and guard it. The process for distribution will have another seven years to be worked on, but the building project must begin immediately on desert land above the flood plain close to every major population centre, where the land is dry and stable.

Joseph travels for the next few months establishing the network of granaries and establishing his bureaucracy to maintain the records that will be needed to ensure supplies are able to last at least eight years until the harvest after the seventh year of famine, plus have extra grain for sale to foreign nations, as part of Egyptian foreign affairs strategies.

He kept records until they had well past their national requirements for eight years, the abundance of grain was so great! The main challenge is to keep all the people in their own areas, and fed there, so that dissent and rebellion do not have time to grow under the pressures of the famine. He knows how long it will be gripping the land and can encourage the people, but the potential for civil unrest is still high, so the granaries are well sited to ensure no-one needs walk more than a few hours to their local storehouse. The local people will be able to "pay" for the grain by public works projects so that all canals and water irrigation works are thoroughly overhauled in the years of famine, and any public buildings needed can be built. Idle hands create problems and Joseph will mentor good management all through these fourteen years.

His two sons are born during the time of plenty to Asenath. Their names are Manasseh, meaning "causing to forget" and Ephraim, meaning "double portion of blessing". The first name does not mean he has forgotten his father and mother and brothers and sisters, but that he has forgotten all the toil and their deceitfulness towards him. He has put the past behind him and is focused forward in his new life. He cannot confront them or deal with them until the right time, and he leaves that in the Lord's hands. As we saw above in Philippians 3:12-17.

Pause and reflect upon this for a minute. As second ruler, he would be able to lead an expedition into Canaan, which Egypt and the Hittites shared rulership over. He would have been well able to manufacture a diplomatic mission over the next six years and visit his parent's campsite and have them all prostrate themselves at his feet! This was possible, but he is not going to manufacture the fulfilment of his initial dream. Genesis 37:5-11.

It is a warning to us all, that God does not need any help to fulfil his prophetic promises. Joseph must wait until the Lord's timing for the next meeting with his father and brothers. Isaac is already dead by the time of his meeting with them and Jacob is very old indeed, and at this point Joseph does not know even whether they are alive or dead; he must simply leave the dream's fulfilment in the Lord's hands. In faith he knows that his father will prostrate himself before him, for the dream tells him that. His mother is in the dream, and in heaven will rejoice in her son's work. Hebrews 12:1-2.

This is our challenge with all the faith-rest tests we face also. Rest in the Lord's timing for his solutions. He has been blessed in Egypt and the task he has is before him then, any trips to Canaan will be side-tracks, the Lord has a plan to bring his family to him, he will not have to go to them. His dream gave him that clue; the star and stalk of wheat that represented him were stationary, while the others bowed around him. He didn't move in his dream; they did! The dream the Lord gave was a picture of faith-rest, not frantic efforts to fulfil it!

**Verses 53 – 57.** The ending of the time of plenty would have been a weird sensation for all in the land, for they had probably been told what was going to happen, but human nature being what it is most would not have believed it. The sign of the famine was first simply the failure of the annual flood of the Nile, and then the failed or severely restricted crop in that year and the drying of the land in the seven years following.

Human nature prefers to screen out bad news and use denial to cope with what isn't pleasant. I suspect the "tax" on, or purchase of additional grain was seen by many as an imposition, much as compulsory saving schemes are seen today, and as time unfolds we will see that few had provided for money savings through this time of plenty to pay for food during the time of famine to come.

Joseph will use this to nationalize much of the land into pharaoh's hands as a result, for he will sell the stored grain at old prices (not highly inflated ones) to the people. From this fact, below, we may surmise that Joseph probably compulsorily purchased the additional grain through the seven years, so that he quite justly sold it back to the people later, and so no-one could complain. In effect it appears he ran a compulsory savings scheme for the land, but those who used up their money on luxuries later lost their land, which had to be sold to pharaoh to buy the grain they had sold to pharaoh back for their use. This may be wrong, and it may simply have been a "tax" – but the seven years of plenty provided ample crops for people to save also, but most did not.

Joseph has a system in place that works, and as the famine bites hard the people of Egypt have grain and no-one starves. The granaries are kept locked for the first year and the people use up all their supplies of food first, and then they ask the local officials for the official granaries to be opened and for them to buy the stored grain. The pharaoh tells the people to see Joseph, and he opens the granaries for business and sells the grain back to the people of the land, and to foreign groups who approach him. For both internal politics and foreign relations the granaries of Egypt become important. Joseph's plan has brought Egypt to the place of ultimate power in the eastern Mediterranean.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. There are things that are settled in the plan of God and are not to be prayed over, for the Lord will not make any changes to the plan. We are to be alert to the Lord's leading in our prayers, and not be influenced by weird theologies which encourage us to twist God's arm to change his mind about things. We are creatures, speaking to our creator!

Prayer is working within the will of the Lord, not against it. Joseph realizes that the famine is coming and tells the pharaoh the truth, he does not waste time by praying about a settled thing! Notice I say "waste" time, for it is to waste time to pray about a settled matter. An example of this is praying about whether you should marry an unbeliever, for the scripture forbids it! Joseph knows the will of the Lord and goes with it, so must we, once we are clear, without prayer meetings called to change the Lord's plan!

2. When we are called into a new situation, in the Spirit we are to walk with confidence that the Holy Spirit will provide what needs to be said and done there and then. We are to be daily ready to serve, to be fit and healthy, and walking in the spirit, then we are to relax with each opportunity and walk forward, armour on in the filling of the Holy Spirit. There is no room for hesitancy or fear in the Lord's service, just moment by moment application of "faith-rest" principles.
3. Joseph is ready to spring into action and he has learned both faith and humility. His new power is not treated with arrogance, and he is able to rule without the distraction of wealth and power going to his head. He calmly establishes the network of granaries and gets moving. We need to be ready to spring into action on a major project at any moment. If you are not ready to move quickly, then address anything in your life that slows you down and eliminate it now! Be ready to serve and the Lord can call you, but don't expect the Lord to call you if you are distracted by the cares of this world and are unable to extricate yourself to serve him.

4. Be ready to change your very identity, if the Lord requires it of you. You may have defined yourself by interests and activities that are “you”. If the Lord calls you into a different path, be ready to change everything about yourself except your love for him and the people close to you. Joseph receives a new name and it speaks truth about his role and destiny and he embraces that destiny. Let us embrace the destiny that the Lord has for each of us and walk with him to fulfil it fully.

**Notes**

**CHAPTER 42**

**INTRODUCTION**

Genesis 42 is the story of three very different believers; Jacob, Reuben and Joseph. These men are examples of what we should and should not be. There was a famine in the land of Canaan, just as there was in Egypt and apparently much of North Africa and the Middle East at this time, and Jacob and his family are starting to feel the pinch as the seven poor years have started to bite into their reserves of food and animals. The chapter opens with the family sitting around looking at each other; all believers, and yet all out of fellowship with the Lord.

Now how can I say this about Jacob and the others? The reason I know they have not been at formal family altar based prayer for possibly twenty years now, is that at no time have they prayed long enough to receive the Lord’s advice, and actually hear it. Jacob could have been told about the famine, but he wasn’t, for he was not listening to God, and the brothers haven’t been either. Jacob has received direct revelation from God – he is the Lord’s prophet – but God has been silent, because Jacob has been carnal! That is the only reason for lack of clear guidance! These people, who have to deal with this situation, have a complete lack of spiritual resources due to their neglect of doctrine.

This group has been backsliding since Joseph left them some 20 years before. For over twenty years the brothers have not dealt with their sins, and Jacob has not recalled them to the family altar. The brothers have also continued to lie to their father about the fate of their brother. Benjamin stays at home now, as Jacob does not trust the other brothers with him, as he suspects foul play with Joseph. This is certainly not a good picture of a believing family working together. Jacob is still playing favorites, with Benjamin this time, rather than Joseph.

**THE BROTHERS VISIT EGYPT**

The brothers come down to Egypt and bow down before Joseph, the ruler, which then confirms the dream which Joseph had been given those many years before. He hasn’t had to approach them; they have come to him. His brothers have previously stated that they will not bow down before him whilst God in the dream says they will. Here is the fulfillment of that prophecy.

Joseph spoke roughly to them, as he didn’t want them to know who he was. He speaks in the Egyptian language, so one of his people will translate for them, and so it will be even harder for them to spot who he is. Twenty one or more years have gone by and so he is changed from the boy they sold as a slave. He accuses them of being spies. Joseph is now putting pressure on them under God’s guidance so that they may be able to face their sin. He is also concerned about his brother Benjamin, and that they have tried to do the same to Benjamin, as they did to him. Joseph also accuses them of coming down to attack Egypt because of the hard times in Palestine. They deny it and say that the youngest brother is with the father and another “is not”. The humour here is that Joseph “is not” gone – he is the one they bow to!

Here it shows that if you are caught in a sin, and don’t face it, then you will compound your sinful state and try to lie your way out of it. Joseph is forcing them to face their sin. Before you can forget your sins and move away from them, Philippians 3:13, you have to deal with them, as you cannot hide a sin without it coming up to haunt you and multiplying in its destructive impact.

Do not bottle up your problems otherwise you are going to have pressure build up within, which can end in mental breakdowns, or even other illness, such as heart disease and even cancer. They have sown sin, lies and deceit and they are now reaping a harvest years later. The Lord has brought them down into Egypt to face the consequences of their sin as it is only after dealing with sin that they can be blessed.

Joseph said to them that he would not believe them unless he saw Benjamin. He says that he is going to send one of them home and keep the rest in Egypt. He put them all in jail for three days to sort them out as from his experience he knew that that had occurred to him.

The problem with the brothers was that they did not fear God at this point, but they will learn to. As believers they have put God out of their reckoning. Joseph says that he is giving them a chance because he believes God. This is a challenge to us as we will see as we go through these chapters.

Joseph tells them, after they have had three days in prison, that one of the brothers will stay in Egypt as a hostage whilst the others can return to Palestine with the wheat. They are asked to bring the youngest brother back. The time of introspection is effective because they realize that they are in this predicament because of what they did to Joseph. For the first time the shepherds of Palestine themselves were in a confined pit not unlike Joseph those many years ago.

They recall that while they were having lunch they refused to listen to the cries and pleadings of Joseph from the pit. They were hard, evil, and unjust. They see that they were wrong, and whilst they are now innocent in this situation they saw that they deserved what they are getting. Reuben says, "I told you so". At the time however he did not have the moral fibre to resist the sin and therefore was as guilty as the others of the sin itself. To know what is good and not to do it is sin. If you see something wrong and you do not oppose it you have sinned. James 4:15-17.

#### THE GRACE OF JOSEPH

Whilst Joseph understood everything that they said he speaks to them through an interpreter. Seven years in supreme power, and as we will see, he is still humbly trusting in God, and he still has love for his brothers. He wept. He was grace orientated. He takes Simeon and claps him in irons and puts him in jail. He tells the servants to fill the sacks of corn and placed in the sacks the "money" (silver) they have paid. He gave them provisions for their journey and they departed. They now head off for home and are surprised when one of them opens their sack and finds the money there. This causes them concern. What is this that God has done to us? they say.

This is typical of statements by carnal believers when they get into trouble. After years of sin and disobedience these men are now worried. Joseph by his actions is making them say "why". Are they being set up? They believe that some of Pharaoh's soldiers will come accusing them of stealing the money. Joseph is dealing with them as God deals with errant believers, he is disciplining them - Hebrews 12:5-13. Here he is continuing to put pressure on them to bring them to the place where they confess their sin and receive blessing.

In verses 29-35 they told Jacob on their return what had happened. Now everybody is concerned. What should a believer do in this pressure? Having confessed our sin we should cast our burdens on the Lord. Jacob's reaction however was that the sons have bereaved him again leaving Simeon in jail and now they want to bereave him of another son in Benjamin. "It will be the death of me. Poor me", is his message to them. How low has Jacob sunk? He is exactly however where a self centred carnal believer gets to without application of Bible doctrine for a long time; the place of spiritual paralysis. He does not pray and he does not call for the revival that would save them all. The family must run out of food again before he acts!

As a pastor you will see this psychological response many times, and you need to take your people back to this section of scripture and call them to act like old Israel should have. Holy Spirit filled Preaching will convict people of sin and they will think at times that they are being followed around by you and they will complain. They will be upset with you for telling them the truth. One old minister used to say, "the Lord has called us to wake up God's sleeping people, and they often wake up grumpy!"

Jacob is failing because he has got away from God and is staying away from Him. If you stay away from God you become weak and become unable to work for your own safety. Reuben is all heart and no brains when he says to Jacob to slay his two sons if he does not bring back Simeon and Benjamin. What possible satisfaction can Jacob have to kill two of his grandsons if his two sons are dead? It is a foolish statement, but illustrates how dumb believers out of fellowship long enough become.

Why is this happening? All this occurs in their lives because people out of fellowship do not think. If you are not walking in the Spirit you are walking as an unbeliever. What does Jacob do? He still does nothing. He will not allow anyone to move and so at the end of the chapter they are all sitting around a campfire looking at one another, eating the corn they bought, watching their supplies get lower and lower. When people are spiritually paralyzed they will suffer greatly, and starvation will affect all the family before Jacob moves as he ought.

At the beginning of chapter 43 their food is all gone and they are all starving again. Jacob now says go and buy a little food. They have got at least 60 adults, possibly as many as 600 to feed so it will need more than “a little food”; they need several tons of food. By this statement Jacob has written off his son Simeon because he does not want to lose Benjamin.

Joseph on the other hand has learnt to trust God and not to get upset. He is able to relax and with God’s grace provision and God’s victorious plan; there are no mental attitude sins now slowing down Joseph’s walk with God. As people we do not see sin as God sees it, we see it as a little thing whilst in practice it is something which God wants dealt with quickly, before it destroys us. The brothers think that by the time they get back down to Egypt Joseph will have forgotten all about the people who came down to buy food those months ago. Hopefully they can sneak in and out and get enough food to keep them going to the end of the famine. But the famine is going to last seven years. The pressure is now coming on Jacob and the others.

**GENESIS 42:1-17**

**“1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. 3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. 4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. 5 And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. 7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. 8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. 9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. 11 We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. 12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. 14 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: 15 Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. 16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. 17 And he put them all together into ward three days.”**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 4.** Notice the tone of these verses. Moses tells the story to make us really sure that old Jacob is truly Jacob; he is not operating as “Israel” here. He has faced the famine without prayer and so, without prayer he urges the boys to go down to Egypt to buy what they need. He does not call a family conference and relight the family altar. He fears the very path he has sent the men on for he thinks and fears that Benjamin will perish, or disappear as Joseph had. He has no peace, because he has no prayer life, nor spiritual life, and has not had for years. This is a sad picture of a carnal family, caught by their own ignoring of the Lord for years now. The father distrusts his sons and fears they will kill their younger brother! They are still alive however and that means there is hope for them all. Psalms 118:17-18, 24-26.

Notice the little details that Moses gives. They are all sitting around in a circle looking at one another; even Judah is back with them all now, but there is no loving relationship between them, and there is no leadership from Jacob, or anyone else. They can’t move to save themselves! You lose more than just fellowship when you fall out of fellowship with the Lord. You lose your inner strength in the end.

Jacob wants the older men to go down as a group, probably for protection. Given the size of the joint households of old Isaac and Jacob there may be in excess of 600 people dependent on their flocks and herds, and with food running out, there are a thousand mouths or more to feed. They need several hundred tons of grain, not just a few bags, and so the ten brothers would each have their servants and many camels. This may be a caravan of hundreds of camels or asses.

Some camel trains of the last century had up to a thousand camels in them, and this is my suspicion here. Moses later mentions asses as the main animal and probably the bulk of the animals are asses as they were more common in Canaan than camels. This is why Joseph gets to personally interview these men. This is a large group, almost like an army that has arrived in Egypt. It is a significant number of tons of grain that is being sold here. Anything less than this will not work for the family for a year, and anything less than a sizeable group would not have involved Joseph; one of his staff would have handled the transaction.

**Verses 5 - 6.** Joseph is identified as the man who sold the wheat, but that is simply the way of saying he was the man responsible before Pharaoh. Moses has already told us that he has built granaries in every population centre, and Egypt had several million people by this time. Joseph is not personally selling the grain like a store keeper simultaneously in a hundred or more sites, but his people are; all sales are done under his personal authority.

In today’s language we explain things exactly as Moses does here, with our central bank notes being printed with the signature of the head/governor of the bank who promises to pay the amount noted. No ordinary citizen would be able to

demand the governor serve them, but when major foreign currency deals are done it is the governor of the Reserve Bank that personally oversees them with his staff as translators and administrators.

In exactly the same way here, when a camel/ass train as large as the sons of Jacob's arrives, Joseph will be told. The sons of Jacob have a large armed band with them for protection against attack by desert raiders, for the famine is hitting everywhere and desperate people will kill for their next meal. Jacob has had to send a small army, probably several hundred armed men, big enough to deter desert raiders, or else his grain will not arrive safely back. For the same reason Joseph is alerted by his staff that a vast animal train has arrived with hundreds of tough armed men of Canaan. Have they come to scope out the granaries of Egypt and then plan an invasion? This was a most likely scenario, as Egypt is the only place with food and countries will go to war if they are desperate.

The sons of Jacob are all men in their fifties or forties now, and they are tough warriors of the wild lands of the North. They look unkempt and violent to the refined and cultured Egyptians, and they would be surrounded by Joseph's armed guards at all times, and would have had to leave their weapons with the camel train before even getting near Joseph. They would be under no illusion that they were under suspicion from the beginning of their visit. They bow to the ground, faces on the floor before their brother. The prophecy is partly fulfilled! Joseph sees the hand of God in this and now begins to test these men who treated him so badly. Genesis 37:5-9.

**Verses 7 – 9.** Joseph recognizes them as they speak. It has been twenty eight years or more since he has seen them, but he knows them, but as he speaks the Egyptian language to them and uses interpreters, and speaks very harshly, their fear will keep their heads firmly pressed to the floor. They are not thinking about Joseph at this point, but only of their own survival.

Within a few days however they will think a great deal about Joseph. They know they are facing a man who can kill them instantly, and they feel the fear of guilty men awaiting the Lord God's hammer to fall upon them. Joseph remembers the two dreams and sees that the Lord has, without his organizing it fulfilled the dreams before his eyes. His father and brother Benjamin are not there but the others all are. Every man who treated him badly is bowing to the ground before him, as totally under his power, as he was previously under their power.

**Verses 10 – 12.** They are keen to prove that they are not spies from the many nations of Canaan, but the members of one family come down to get food for their starving encampment. They claim to be honest and true men; men who can be depended upon. As Jesus said in John 7:18; "he that speaks great things of himself seeks his own glory". Joseph knows these men are anything but "true"; they are a pack of crooks who have not told their father of their past sin against him. They are men who their own father did not trust to look after sheep and sent Joseph to check them out! Joseph will be having a job here not laughing out loud at their claims to be good men.

Joseph ends this interview with the affirmative statement that sends them all to jail, "No, you are all spies". That ends the discussion from an Egyptian perspective; the Pharaoh's man has decided, but they won't stop, for they are desperate men now. If they fail in their mission, their father, their wives, and their children will die. Every day's delay means someone may die, for Jacob's delay has meant the situation back home is critical. They have no time to waste, but Joseph has plenty of time to teach them a lesson and really test them to see if they have learned from their past evil and repent of it now.

**Verses 13 – 17.** At this point Joseph must have held his breath, for they acknowledge twelve brothers, with one (him) who "is not" and the other is at home with their father. They have foolishly given him the number of brothers and he can count only ten. He has a natural concern for young Benjamin, now in his twenties, to ensure that he is not under the same threat that he was from the other ten. Joseph will give them the ultimate pressure situation and see what comes out of the pressure cooker. He makes it clear that he is testing them, and by swearing "by the life of pharaoh" he is formally stating that with Pharaoh's authority he will execute them all if they are found to be spies. Joseph then states, you won't go back until your youngest brother comes here.

Now they have many servants who can carry the message, so it wouldn't be a problem, but the brothers know the stress that this will cause their worried father. He is prepared to allow on of them to go back with the servants to announce the "deal" to their father. If they care about their father at all, their response will show their attitude clearly to Joseph. He wants to see what is within them and this is a great psychological test for them. He makes it clear that his mind is settled on this and they must now face their past in jail, with Joseph's men listening in and reporting back his brother's conversations.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. When people are convicted of sin they will behave in an interesting way. As pastors we need to remember that convicted people can react in quite informative ways, and not take things personally when they get angry, or weep. Our job is to tell the truth of God and "let the chips fall where they may". Joseph will see quickly that his brothers have repented, but he will wait until they have come to terms with their sins fully. People are always sorry when they are caught out in sin, but only over time do we see the true "fruit of repentance", which will be fruit of the Holy Spirit in their changed lives.
2. Jacob's family leadership has fallen down and this is a terrible picture of what happens when a believer stays out of spiritual fellowship long enough. The family circle that this chapter confronts is an awful indictment upon

Jacob's failure as a father. He has twelve sons and many daughters, but he has misery because he has not been spiritually an example for his sons to follow. Dealing with sin is not an optional extra in our lives. If we do not confront sin and evil it will destroy our inner peace and the enjoyment of our lives, but then move on to destroy our family, community, and then finally our nation. The scriptures tell us, "be sure your sins will find you out".

3. Famine ought not to be faced without prayer! When we face any crisis we need to bathe it in prayer. Jacob fails his family and the suffering of the children must have been terrible in this time, and it was all caused by prayerlessness! Let us keep short accounts with the Lord and bring everything before Him in prayer daily. Failure to deal with things by prayer means we must face other means of bringing us to knowledge of truth, and in God's economy that means, DIVINE DISCIPLINE.
4. There are two sayings, "the wheel turns", and "what goes around comes around". They sum up the fact that bad deeds tend to haunt people. No one gets away with their evil towards others. Evil does not produce good and there are many wealthy people who are miserable, for they got their money by abusing others and finally it comes back to bite them. The brothers of Joseph start to see that their actions twenty eight plus years before may now be starting to come back upon them. Be sure your sins will find you out! Let us warn people and keep our own sinful tendencies under control.

**Notes**

**GENESIS 42:18-38**

**"18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: 19 If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: 20 But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so. 21 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. 23 And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. 24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. 26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. 27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. 28 And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us? 29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, 30 The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. 31 And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: 32 We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. 33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: 34 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land. 35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. 36 And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. 37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. 38 And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 18 – 20.** Joseph leaves them for another three days in jail without any word from him or guards as to their fate. They do not know whether they will be taken out and executed, or be visited any moment by the executioner in their cell! Having given them an experience of fear in a foreign jail for three days and three nights he then brings them out and speaks to them again and offers a deal. Notice his words carefully.

Firstly he reminds them that he fears the Lord. The problem they face, is a problem precisely because they do not fear the Lord! They face fear of men because they did not fear the Lord their God. They are challenged by Joseph to pray by his choice of words to them. They have an opportunity to relieve their starving families and also to show who has nobility and will offer to stay behind until the others return. They are then reminded that only if they bring their youngest brother back will they be given more food the second time and if they don't then the brother left behind will die in jail, and they will all starve in Canaan. The brothers are immediately tested and their father Jacob will be tested later as he faces this reality!

**Verses 21 – 24.** Joseph uses an interpreter so they have no idea that he understands their words and he hides the effect of them upon him. He is moved to tears as he hears Reuben speak and leaves the room briefly. As the second leader of the nation he was able to do this without the slightest problem being seen by the men, for such men are expected to come and go as affairs of State dictate. The brothers are in a foreign country and Joseph underlines that fact, yet they are still in the hands of God. This is the message of the Word of God; there is no place that we are not in the hands of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 33:27-29, Psalms 3:8, 40:1-5, 68:22, 106:6-12, 107:23-43, 130:1-6, Jonah 2:1-9. These Old Testament verses are an ever present resource for the troubled believer; they remind us that we cannot ever be away from the one who made us and created the entire universe!

The convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit is upon them as carnal believers. They know they have sinned and they know exactly the sin they are being judged for here, for they feel the same fear they saw on Joseph's face the day they sold him into slavery. They then discuss the details that Moses has not mentioned earlier; that Joseph wept and pleaded with them not to do the evil they had planned. He entreated them with tears to stop the evil and be reconciled with him and resolve their deep hatred towards him. They knew it was evil then and they see that God is rightly punishing them now.

Reuben does the, "I told you so" routine, which is unhelpful, but does underline he had the right thoughts, just lacked the courage to follow through! God requires we have more than honourable intentions; he requires that we follow through with righteousness. To believe and not to follow through is sin! Luke 12:47-48, James 4:17.

Reuben is right; "Blood is required". They have sinned and the penalty is death for their sin. What he has not remembered is the family altar and the blood sacrifice upon it that covered his sin. They have still not thought of the sacrifice for sins.

Joseph weeps, but does so after leaving the room, so that he has privacy with his own feelings. He sees that they have felt sorry for their sins, but their sorrow is still quite self centred, emotional, and more "sorry we are caught", than genuine repentance. He knows they are heading in the right direction for there to be reconciliation down track, but he also knows that the time is not right. Will they be able to face their father, and will they deal honourably with Benjamin?

He takes Simeon and binds him with chains before their eyes and he is carried off to the jail again. He will remain locked up until they return with Benjamin. Why Simeon? Reuben was the oldest, but he had tried to dissuade the others from selling Joseph, so it is Simeon who as the second oldest must be hostage. All things are being done to underline the fact that Joseph is doing the Lord's work here to bring them all to repentance, Simeon as he lies in jail, and the others as they head back to Canaan.

**Verses 25 – 28.** The wheat is loaded into sacks and placed on the animal train. The brothers are each carrying grain on their own asses. There will be many tons of grain here, for it must feed them for a year. They head off into the desert and camp for the night after they are as far away from Egyptian civilization as they can go in a day. To feed their animals they use the grain, and as one gets some out of the sack he has, he discovers the money silver/gold at the top of the sack. All discover the same in their sacks.

Their response is one of fear, for they know that this means someone is playing a trick on them. Their response is interesting after their discovery of the gold and silver, "What has God done to us?" They are starting to ask the right questions now!

- Isaiah 45:6-13.** "6. *That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*  
 7. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*  
 8. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.*  
 9. *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?*  
 10. *Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?*

11. *Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*
12. *I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.*
13. *I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts."*

**Verses 29 – 35.** They now recount what has happened during their trip into Egypt. Old Israel knows that one is missing, for over the last twenty eight years he has been counting the group each time, having lost one! Notice how they tell the story and the way they gloss over their own and Simeon's jailing. They emphasize that they were accused of being spies and were treated with severity and suspicion. They mention that to prove they were not spies of the lands and city-states of Canaan they had to tell about their family and the number of brothers they had.

They then report that the man promised to provide a licence to buy grain if they proved their story true; that indeed they had another younger brother and they were from one family and not spies of the city-states preparing to attack Egypt. Having stated this, they tell the most scary thing to them, that they then found all their silver and gold, that had been used to buy the corn in the sacks with the grain.

They had the grain and the wealth they had used to pay for it, and they did not go back for an explanation. Their point is clear in all this. They have to go back for Simeon, for other wise they will starve to death, but they also need to take Benjamin, and they need to be ready to report about the silver and gold, and they need to go soon, for the longer they delay the more suspicious their story will sound to the Egyptians.

It may appear that they were deliberately hiding the fact that they got their money back! They know that the return of money must be deliberate, for it was found in all ten camel sacks, not just one. They are baffled and scared. They know that they have been set up, but they cannot understand why and what for. God is not mentioned in their account, but Israel will start to see things spiritually, even if only after a number of months of worry, and then just a little.

**Verses 36 – 38.** Jacob answers and what an answer is this. It shows just how self centred and selfish this man has become in the days of carnality in Canaan these last twenty eight years. He is absorbed with the loss of his son Joseph and now fears the loss of the other two, although he will "write off" Simeon quickly.

Reuben now nobly offers his own two sons as hostage for the return of Benjamin. It is a genuine offer on Reuben's part, for he feels deeply his own cowardice in not delivering Joseph when he could, and probably is baffled as to why the second oldest is in jail in Egypt and not him. Guilt drives him to make this offer, and logically it is foolishness, for as I said above, what satisfaction does a grandfather get in avenging the loss of his sons by killing his grand-sons?

Jacob will not budge on this matter of Benjamin, for he is still too much in grief over the loss of Joseph. His personal worry will delay the return trip to Egypt and place the family's survival in jeopardy yet again. He does not build the altar and pray; he chooses to worry and fret! That choice is also ours, each and every day we face concerns in our daily lives. Let us pray and cast our cares upon the Lord, for worry wastes energy we need to achieve our service for the Lord.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. In this world we will either fear the Lord or fear everything! As creatures within a creation we do not have the knowledge or power to live without fear, our choice is only what we will fear or respect. If we fear the Lord and discover his love for us, our fear is absorbed in his love, mercy and grace and our strength is found in his plan for us. Let us walk in the plan of God; the only alternative is to be fearful of everything and to jump at shadows.
2. Be sure your sins will find you out, unless you deal with them! The Lord wants us to be without fear and guilt, and through confession of sin He has provided a way to release ourselves from the burdens that the Lord Jesus Christ carried for us! Let us release ourselves by dealing with everything that separates us from the plan of God, and let us walk in the spirit, in the light of God's Word, and so we will not stumble at any actions of men.
3. Joseph does not rush to disclose his identity, for he seeks the fruit of the spirit in the lives of his brothers and he sees little evidence of their lives having changed since they dealt so badly with him. He rightly tests them and slowly they come back to fellowship. Joseph is not seeking his pleasure, nor is he trying to play happy families with his dysfunctional brothers; rather he is trying to move them to repentance and genuine change. He seeks their spiritual good. He sets us the example of focused concern for those we love, not seeking our own outcomes, but their spiritual blessing and growth.

### **Notes**

**CHAPTER 43****GENESIS 43:1-15**

“1 And the famine was sore in the land. 2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. 3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. 4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: 5 But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. 6 And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? 7 And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? 8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. 9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: 10 For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time. 11 And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12 And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: 13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: 14 And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. 15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.”

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 5.** The famine really starts to bite in the second or third year without adequate rains. The burden of it is described as “heavy” on the family of Jacob. They are feeling the depressive heat, and the total lack of decent food for their animals. There is enough to give hope initially but then the dry season kills off the animals and starves the people of the basics of life. Some crops survive and by the time they get down into Egypt the family will still have the breeding stock of their herds and flocks, but they are feeling the famine greatly now, but Jacob is still in denial. Acts 7:9-13.

They have eaten up all the wheat they have brought from Egypt and then Jacob says, “lets get a little more!” He has not moved early enough to stop the children going hungry. Also he needs tons of wheat for another season, and he keeps saying “a little”. Two months before the food ran out was the right time to head down and make the return journey, for by camel train two months needed to be allowed for the relief column to arrive back.

Like all carnal believers Jacob is still not thinking at all. His family will suffer because of this, and that is Moses point to us, that when we get away from God we cannot move ahead of our needs, for we lack the divine direction to avoid want. Romans 8:35. Believers in fellowship receive prophetic warnings to keep them from disaster so that they can act early enough to avoid catastrophe. Acts 11:27-30, Romans 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

God warns the church several years before the famine strikes the Eastern end of the Roman Empire and so for a number of years the churches are able to gather funds to ensure the churches in Judea are able to purchase the food they will need to out last the famine that is coming. God uses the prophetic gifts in the church to ensure we are ready for the coming tests. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Judah takes leadership from Jacob at this point and tells the truth, which is the task of all leadership. Telling the truth in love is our role as pastors and leaders of the Lord’s flocks. Refer to the EBCWA LEADERSHIP MANUAL, and also to the BTB topics, CHURCH – PASTORAL AUTHORITY, SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP.

Judah reminds his father of the definite statement of the Egyptian ruler, who said absolutely that unless they brought their younger brother there would be no release of Simeon and no release of grain to them! In fact the ruler had made it clear that if they didn’t fulfil this requirement, that they would be seen as spies and probably executed forthwith!

The words “you shall not see my face” meant two things to these men; firstly they wouldn’t get grain because only Joseph could release it to foreigners, and secondly they wouldn’t see anything, because they would all be dead as spies!

**Verses 6 – 7.** Jacob is still in a totally self centred mode of thinking. Moses calls him “Israel” to contrast his behaviours here with the behaviour expected of him before the Lord who renamed him. He is still doing the “poor me” routine here. “Why did you tell him that?” Does this matter now? For many months the fact that this Egyptian ruler knows about Benjamin is an irrelevancy, the only relevant thing is that he has the food and they must deal with him on his terms, not theirs!

In business it is called “The Golden Rule”. What this means is that the person with the gold, or the goods, makes the rules about how you go about getting them! Jacob must come to terms with reality, not keep living in the land of wishful thinking. This is a challenge for us all. We need to live in the real world, not a fantasy world. Our faith is real, and God’s

power, through the Holy Spirit is real, and so we need to walk in the filling and armour of the Holy Spirit, and then we can face the realities of this world. Refer to the BTB studies, CHRISTIAN LIFE: SOLDIER on page 51 , CHRISTIAN LIFE: WALKING on page 12 and HOLY SPIRIT: FILLING below.

**Verses 8 – 10.** Still we wait for Jacob to rebuild his family altar and sacrifice and pray for the famine and for the loss of Simeon and possibly Benjamin, but he sits on the ground and feels sorry for himself. Judah is the one taking charge and with urgency calls his father to release Benjamin to them and for them to be gone by lunch time and back as soon as they can. The family is hungry already, and by the time they get back some may have died. As Judah correctly identifies, they should be back from their second trip at this point. It is desperate, but Jacob dithers.

This is the sad picture of carnality and it's erosive effect upon the soul of the person who allows themselves to go cold towards God. Refer back to the BTB study of CHRISTIAN LIFE: SPIRITUALITY-CARNALITY on page 64. Jacob is still Israel; he is still a believer, he is just not walking as one here. Judah does not make the promise of Reuben, but it is a mature and thoughtful one; that he carry the blame forever for failure. He is taking leadership here and the leadership of the twelve tribes will go to Judah, from whom the true line of kings will later come. Genesis 49:8-12.

**Verses 11 – 15.** Now Moses gives us the clue that Jacob has prayed and is now operating as he ought to have been from the beginning many months before. He now thinks clearly as God's man for the crisis. He acknowledges that this is the reality they face now and they must immediately make the plans to approach Egypt this time with the best chance of success.

He directs the boys to empty their larder of the richest foods and spices that the land produces, that Egyptian traders look for as delicacies for Egyptian kings. He gets all their supplies of balm from Gilead, Myrrh from the Arab traders of Arabia, special spices, a special honey of Canaan (or possibly "grape honey" – special syrup made from the new grapes), almonds, and pistachio nuts. This list was the "delicacy" shopping list of traders and is designed as the most expensive present for a king that this land of Canaan could provide. Israel also tells them to take double money this time, in case the return of the initial money was a mistake; for that is what they will say when returning it. Israel is thinking about the "script" for his sons to use when they come down before this great ruler to explain their delay in returning.

He then refers to God for the first time in months. His expression of fate is at least a resignation of his own ability to deliver his sons, and his acceptance of submission to the only one who can deliver them all; the Lord God alone. God alone can deliver us today also, and his mercy is what we cast ourselves upon. There is also the resignation of the death of the boys if they are to die. His faith is not in the answer to his prayers, but at least he has stepped aside from his self centeredness. They must take a risk and they have done everything possible to mitigate the risk. Refer to the BTB study MERCY.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Carnality lowers both the thinking of those affected by it, and their courage and mental stability. Israel is an example of what not to do; it is always a disaster to pull back from living fellowship with the Lord our God. Daily prayer is an essential for life! The burden of carnality is always heavy!
2. God still warns his people of coming disasters. We are called to be in touch with the Lord through prayer and to expect the prophetic gift to operate to protect us from coming natural disasters. The prophetic gift operates with precision and once a person is shown to have invented revelation, they are to be dismissed as charlatans. God's prophets speak truth with precision.

Prophecy is not "learned"; it is a gift that is given. When the prophets spoke they did so with courage, clarity and precision. What they said was testable and proven correct over time. Let us test the prophetic voices in our own day and eliminate the swarm of false prophets that bring the Lord's person and work into disrepute.

3. Self centred patterns of thinking are always signs of carnality. The centre of the believers thinking pattern in spirituality is Christ and then others. We resolve all matters that affect ourselves, through our worship of the Lord and our service of his flock. Nothing legitimate is resolved by self centred patterns of thinking.

Doctrinal thinking is shown by it's agape love/care for others and it's firm grasp upon the reality of the problems faced. Faith confronts the reality of a problem with the reality of the superiority of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit over everything that happens in this present world!

**DOCTRINES**

**PROPHET**

**CHRISTIAN LIFE: GIVING**

**HOLY SPIRIT: FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**MERCY**

**CHURCH: - PASTORAL AUTHORITY**

**CHURCH: -SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP**

**GENESIS 43:16-34**

“16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. 17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. 18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. 19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, 20 And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: 21 And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. 22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. 23 And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. 24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. 25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there. 26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. 27 And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? 28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. 29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. 32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. 33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. 34 And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of their's. And they drank, and were merry with him.”

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 16 – 18.** Joseph is still testing his brothers. He wants to do things to them that make them see and feel the grace of God towards them, so that they will be ready to see that they are forgiven. As they gather before Joseph for the second time he sees Benjamin with them. He is going to give them a banquet in his own house/palace and Simeon will have joined them by then. They are receiving grace blessings and they have no explanation, and their response is fear.

Men are always baffled when they receive blessing, when they expect, through their guilt, judgment. These men deserve death and they know it, and so they feel unable to relax and enjoy blessing, for they feel unworthy. Unconfessed sin always robs us of enjoyment of life. They judge Joseph on the basis of their own behaviours. They believe he is after their asses and servants as they would think back home. This is the reminder that they have come to Egypt with a significant group of serving men and asses/camels. They have come here for hundred of tons of food, not just a little. They are however still thinking as petty minded men of Canaan; think for a minute about the wealth Joseph has at his disposal, for one of the richest men in the world does not need their asses!

When we judge others on the basis of our experience rather than the reality of their own, we betray the fact that our thinking is limited and flawed! When we walk with the Lord we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit and so we think at the right level to achieve the results God wants from us, for we see things God's way, rather than in accord with our own natural man's limitations.

**Verses 19 – 22.** They defeat their fear by honesty here. They know that they are in a place where they can easily be set up and made to appear thieves, so they quickly report to Joseph's chief steward the discovery of the gold and silver in the top of their sacks after their last visit. They make it clear, even before they cross over the threshold of Joseph's house that they have brought the money back and doubled the amount for the grain this year.

The servant of Joseph gives them the believer's greeting; be at peace. All is well for these men, for they are in their master's hands, and those hands are God's. These men need to learn that they are in the master's hands, and later Moses will sum this up. Deuteronomy 33:37. “The eternal God is your refuge. Underneath are the everlasting arms of God”.

**Verses 23 – 25.** The servant has his “script” from Joseph in advance for their possible explanations of the money being present in their sacks. The servant reports that he was paid and clearly the Lord their God has given them the money as a blessing. It is the reminder that Joseph has led his own servant to the Lord and he is a man of faith who is used to speaking of the Lord God. It is a challenge to the brothers to pray and seek their answers to the unanswerable questions within the character of God, not the plots of men. Hebrews 13:5-6, 13-18.

They are ready to bless Joseph when he arrives for lunch and they wait nervously for his arrival at his palace. They prepare their gifts and the money is also laid out ready to show that they come as traders seeking food, not as spies seeking knowledge of Egyptian strengths and weaknesses.

**Verses 26 – 27.** Joseph's servant provides water for them and their animals, and water for the washing of their feet after their journey. They are able to clean themselves up and prepare to be entertained by the second in charge of Egypt. It is a reminder to us that Joseph has a palace with extensive space and servants to care for these men and their vast animal train and all their servants. To feed several hundred men and animals requires significant resources and as these men lay out their "gifts" they will be thinking surrounded by the wealth of the greatest nation of their day, that their gifts are paltry things when compared to the wealth of Joseph.

Just so it is with the Lord and ourselves; we bring our gifts before the Lord, and they are small against the great grace we have received, yet the Lord uses all we bring before him. One saint said of his giving to the Lord, which was extensive. "I just shovel all I can out to the Lord's work, and the Lord shovels back into my life, and I have discovered that God's shovel is always bigger than mine." The sons of Jacob now bow to the earth again before Joseph their brother, and so fulfil the prophetic dream yet again, now the third time.

Joseph then asks them concerning their family and the health of their father especially, given the great age they said he was. Such an inquiry will not bring suspicion, for to ask after the health of a father is still a common thing in the Arabic world, and to bless a visitor's father is a common way of showing friendship and real concern for the visitor. Joseph is blessing these men and they know it, and they see that their paltry gifts, although accepted with graciousness, are not going to be the basis of any dealings with this man.

Joseph wants them to see that they are in God's hands and slowly they are starting to see that. Joseph has returned Simeon and he is in better shape than they are, so they know he is a man of integrity, but they are yet to be tested further in the matter of Benjamin. They failed to protect Joseph from their own malice, and none would lay his life on the line to save their brother; will they this time act to save their youngest brother?

**Verses 28 – 34.** Joseph then looked hard at them all and sees Benjamin, his full brother and his mother's little boy, now fully grown, and he weeps, tears flooding down his face. The brothers do not see this for their heads are well and truly pressed into the marble floor. Joseph quickly leaves the room and composes himself.

The brothers will be staying in their prostrate position through this time and the pause between Joseph's words with his abrupt leaving the room will simply add to their consternation. They are feeling their utter powerlessness and so they should, for they have always been in God's hands and so are we all. We kid ourselves with our pretence of powerfulness, for against God's plan we are pathetic. We live and move and have our very being in the grace, love, mercy and plan of God alone! Acts 17:24-28.

Joseph orders the food to be served and the servants will call the prostrated men to the table. They do not see Joseph for a time, but they do see a table set with a banquet fit for kings. Joseph eats separately to them, at a table a distance away, but once again within the culture of the time, this was acceptable, for he was a king. For him this means he is not emotionally overcome, and also it means that they cannot see him too closely and spot who he is before he is ready to disclose himself.

The brothers would expect to be eating separately, and it gave them time to speak amongst themselves and for their conversations to be overheard. Every stop of this process is focused upon their thinking, for Joseph needs to know that they have changed, and are indeed different men to the ones who sold him as a slave. He will only move to disclose himself once he is sure that they have learned and repented fully.

Moses makes it clear that the reason the Egyptians did not eat with the men of Canaan, is that they were disgusted with their table manners and also they ate different foods. The Egyptians were refined and these men of Canaan are wild field and tent dwellers. There was a vast cultural gulf between them. The brothers understood they were different and felt their strangeness and inferiority again.

This conviction is what Joseph wants to amplify, for it will lead them to the truth about their behaviours towards him. Joseph does another thing to suggest that they are well known to him; he sets the table with their names and places assigned to them in accord with their age in the family, but Benjamin receives five times as much food as the others. They eat and drink and have a great time, but they note these things as "strange".

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Joseph is focused upon his brother's spiritual state. He seeks to help them any way he can to confront the truth about their past sin and their present state of grace under God and his own care. Joseph is a picture of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, who is ever focused upon our learning and our good. Let us be focused upon the good we can do to others, rather than any self centred motivation.
2. Unconfessed sin hinders the enjoyment of all the details of life. The brothers suffer because they will not face their sin and deal with it. This is God's warning to us all; deal with sin or it will spoil far more than your fellowship with the Lord. It will destroy your very enjoyment of life itself.
3. Joseph is prepared to spend great resources of time and money to try to assist his brothers to come to terms with their sin and need for forgiveness. We must ask ourselves how far we would go to assist our brethren when they are in need of facing their sins. We must be ready to do anything to assist those who the Lord lays upon

our heart. Joseph gives everything he can to achieve his results. This is the Christ like character that sets us the example to follow.

## **Notes**

## **CHAPTER 44**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Jacob has been selfish and out of fellowship as a believer for many years now, with his favouritism in the past and his inaction in the present making others suffer. It is the Lord's warning to us all, if we do not deal with mental attitude sins specifically we will make others suffer. Envy and bitterness will eat away at people, destroying them and their happiness from within. Jacob had waited until they have eaten everything up before acting to get more food for the coming year. It is going to take a month to go down and come back with food for the family. During that time those left behind will be hungry. Sin places you in a position where if you do not act quickly enough to sort out your problems then you and everyone around you will suffer.

### **ARGUMENTS OVER BENJAMIN GOING TO EGYPT**

Judah, as we have seen, tells Jacob that if he does not allow Benjamin to come down to Egypt they will not be able to show their faces there. Jacob is called Israel through chapters 42-43, although he is not really acting like Israel. They are brethren even though they are not acting as brethren should. They are believers in the Lord, even though their carnality hinders their enjoyment and relaxation in that fact.

Why did you tell him you had a younger brother? said Jacob. This is so pathetic for such a great man to be reduced to this. Judah identified that they had to tell the man the truth. Judah said to Israel, send the lad with me. Judah, from whose tribe David and the Lord will descend, sees the situation clearly as well as the action required. He tells his father that they have to play straight with this man. "If we do not go we are all going to die", says Judah, and he notes that he will be surety for Benjamin. This is a far more sensible than the alternative suggested by Reuben.

If they had not procrastinated they would have been down to Egypt and back with food by this point. As a believer you will come up against many stubborn Christians, just like Jacob, and you need to be honest with them or you will see them suffer like these men and their families do. Lack of doctrine applied makes fools of us all and failure to deal with sin destroys our peace. The rebuke of Judah snaps Jacob out of sin and at this point he prayed, perhaps for the first time in 20 years.

### **FAVOURITISM**

In these previous chapters we see that the problem of favouritism is still present in the family of Jacob, with Benjamin having replaced Joseph. This is given in the passage that compares Simeon with him. Jacob is fatalistic in saying that if he is bereaved of his children he is bereaved. There should be no fatalism in the Christian life. Believing faith is nowhere near fatalism; it is belief in the Plan of God. However Jacob is on the way back to some form of spiritual understanding, which is better than it was.

When you are counselling someone who has been out of fellowship for a long time do not expect them to become mature and stable immediately. We should keep short accounts with God so that we retain our level of maturity, but if we do not, then we will resemble Jacob. We should be trusting God in complete faith. God has been giving mercy all the time although Jacob, who has been out of fellowship, has not been able to see it. This story is a reminder to us to be patient with those who have walked away from the true path for their life, for it will take some time to come back.

### **THE SONS IN EGYPT**

When they arrive in Egypt Joseph asks his servants to bring them to his home and to prepare a meal for them. All the brothers are brought into Joseph's house and they are all afraid. They believe Joseph is going to accuse them of stealing money because of the money in the sacks and steal their asses which in the modern days would mean confiscation of

their cars. These are country boys whose status symbol was the ass. (Quite appropriate for them!) They have been convicted and are starting to think about right and wrong. They really have not truly confessed their sins to God and are still living in fear, but like their father, they are starting to face the facts about their guilt before God.

They think that they ought to be honest about the money. They say that they found the money in the sacks and brought it back. It is of interest that the steward of Joseph's house has been converted and brings up the Lord God's name before them. Another challenge is given them to repent.

The servant brings Simeon out to them, their feet are washed and the animals provided for. As Joseph arrives they bring presents to him and they bow to the earth in conformity with his original dream. He asked after Jacob and saw Benjamin and he blessed his younger brother who does not yet recognise him. He orders his servants to set the table. He is testing his brothers to see what has happened in the couple of months since they were here last. He sets the table in the order of their age and provides Benjamin with five times more than the others. Will they notice, and will they be jealous? They pass this test.

#### THE BROTHERS ARE TESTED FURTHER

In the New Testament times the master of the feast would guide people to the high or low table. In the feast it is the master of the feast who allocates the place of honour. This is important as it tells you of your position in that organisation or gathering. Joseph however does not eat with them. He sets parcels of food in front of all the brothers, with the parcel in front of Benjamin some five times larger than that in front of the rest of the brothers.

What is the problem in this family and caused them to put Joseph in the pit? Jealousy is their mental attitude sin. Joseph is testing his brothers to see if they are jealous of Benjamin as they were of him. This is to see if he can embrace them as brothers or if they are still murderers at heart. This is to see if God has dealt with them and rid them of the envy, jealousy and hatred in their soul. They passed the test. They ate and drank and enjoyed themselves and no one was concerned that Benjamin had so much more than anyone else. They are starting to look to their own path and not be jealous of others.

They have dealt with jealousy but how will they deal with injustice? Joseph's action in chapter 44 is unjust and it is deliberately so. He not only puts the money in the sack but puts his own silver goblet in Benjamin's sack. They have only gone a couple of kilometres when a servant of Joseph, with a small army in tow, catches up with them and asks them what have they done. He is very angry with them, saying, "you have drunk with my Lord and done evil". He is likely to be accompanied by several hundred or thousand soldiers.

They deny his accusation, and say that they are not guilty, which is true. They however have not confessed their earlier sin. They say that anyone who stole silver out of the house of Joseph should die and the rest should be his slaves. The cup is found in Benjamin's sack and they all rend their clothes, which is a sign of great anguish. They know it is a set up, they know that there is something wrong, and they know that their brother will die and are overcome with grief and mutual guilt and confusion.

Judah goes to Joseph and falls on his face before him. Joseph says that he reads minds, and so, "do not try and get anything past me". In Egypt he is known as the diviner of dreams. He is not being arrogant; he is pushing the brothers to an extreme, as they need to confess their own sins and to be honest about everything. Judah knows they are not guilty but he takes the rap, he is admitting responsibility, he is learning to say "no excuse sir", even when he has got one. This is a major issue for service as a leader before the Lord for us all. Learn to handle injustice through prayer, Hebrews 4:16, 1 Peter 5:5-10, and leave it in the Lord's hands for Him to set it right.

Joseph again puts the pressure on them by stating that the person in whose sack the cup was found shall be his servant for ever. "You go back to your father", he tells the rest of them. If they go back they will show that they do not really care for him, and if they do anything other than offer themselves for Benjamin, it will show that they are not changed men.

#### JUDAH THE SUBSTITUTE

In verses 22 and following Judah now tells the whole truth including the fact that Israel has said that if anything happens to Benjamin it will kill him. Joseph now realizes what his father had thought of his disappearance. They are concerned for the brother as well as the father. They love their father and do not want to hurt him. These people have been treated as second class family as far as Joseph and now Benjamin is concerned. Even though they have been treated in that way, they now love and respect their father, and have learned to love their brother.

Judah says that he will stay as a substitute for Benjamin. Judah is prepared to suffer in Benjamin's place, he is willing to die so that Benjamin and his father might live, which is a great picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When carnal believers start dealing with sin they can recover. Joseph by pressure has brought them into a position where they are going to be brought into a right relationship with God and their brother who they thought was dead. Moses message to us through these chapters is a strong one. Come clean with God and be the person you should be and the Lord will lift you up. 1 Peter 5:6-7. We have not got the same time frame as these brothers, so keep your accounts short! Now that they are acting in accordance with God's standards they are going to be blessed in a way they did not think possible.

**GENESIS 44:1-34**

“1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. 2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. 3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. 4 And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? 5 Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing. 6 And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. 7 And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: 8 Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? 9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. 10 And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. 11 Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. 12 And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. 14 And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. 15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? 16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. 17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father. 18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? 20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. 21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. :22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die. 23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. 24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25 And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. 26 And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. 27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: 28 And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: 29 And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. 30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; 31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. 33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. 34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 4.** Joseph sets up Benjamin and his brothers. This is the last and greatest test for them all; the pushing of them beyond limits, so they feel the deepest fear and sadness possible. Why does Joseph punish them this badly? Only by pushing them this far can he truly know that they have nothing but love and concern for their father and their young brother. They are set up with all the food they can carry, and once again the money is returned in the top of each brother's sack.

The silver cup is in Benjamin's sack, but he doesn't see this, for he would not check his load and the others don't think to this time. It has been a year since they last found the money and they probably hadn't thought to look this time until too late. The loading is done overnight and the asses are ready to head away in the morning and the servant sends them away from Joseph's house without Joseph himself seeing them off. They would not expect the second ruler of Egypt to personally farewell them so this also would not make them think twice. Joseph does not let them get very far this time before sending a hot pursuit after them.

They have not had time to stop and check their asses' loads at all by the time Joseph's servant catches them up, probably with a couple of hundred cavalry with him. This is not a polite and calm exchange that will occur here. The opening words that the servant is to utter are, “why have you given evil for good?” In other words, they are accused of betraying the hospitality of the ruler of Egypt! It doesn't get more serious than this for these men!

**Verses 5 – 9.** The cup that has been stolen is a famous cup; it is what was called a “divining cup”. There are a number of explanations for this, from the cultic to the fantastic. The cup was clearly a cup associated with Joseph, whose name was “the man who interprets dreams”. It was his personal cup of office, possibly made by order of Pharaoh for his personal use.

It was like a cup of office that represented all that he stood for as a diviner of dreams of the pharaoh and spiritual high priest for the nation. It probably had symbols upon it that represented the interpretation of dreams, although Joseph didn't need such a cup in order to interpret dreams, but the cup represented the work God had done through him for pharaoh. To steal an ordinary golden cup was to spend the rest of your life in prison, but to steal an official cup like this would be to die horribly! The servant makes clear that an offence has been committed that is far above simple theft!

Joseph's brothers are mortified, shocked and strongly proclaim their innocence, for they are guilty of nothing here and with clear consciences they proclaim the truth. They call on the Lord God to witness to their innocence. They are thinking of the Lord now, but use his name in vain here, for they have been framed thoroughly and they do not realise how thoroughly until the sacks are opened and they discover the money again and this time the double amount! The worst shock is the discovery of the special golden cup in Benjamin's sack.

Has the Lord left them in all this? The answer is a resounding "NO!" They have been out of living fellowship with the Lord for many years, but the Lord has not let them go, and in their conviction here, and their entrapment, they are being brought back to Him. God does hear their cry here. Moses will reflect upon the way the Lord works upon them for he sees that he works also the same way upon the Exodus generation. Deuteronomy 8:1-6. The New Testament writers also reflect upon the discipline and loving care of the Lord. Romans 8:28-39, Hebrews 12:5-23.

Before they realise that both lots of money are in the sacks they remind the servant that they confessed that they discovered the first money last time and brought it back this time. Why would they steal anything, given that they brought so much gold and silver back this time? They do not need to steal silver or gold. That is why it was the "diviners cup" that Joseph caused to be hidden in the sack, for a different motive than simple theft would lead a man to steal a religious object that may be an object of spiritual power. Joseph is testing their religious scruples here and seeing whether they have an answer to this accusation. Paganism has plagued Jacob's family since Rachel stole the family gods of her father. Are the brothers still partly pagan, or do they worship the one true God alone?

They deny the theft of anything on the basis of no need to steal silver and gold, and then they state their certainty that none of their number would be tempted by this religious object by their next answer. They are so sure of the spiritual beliefs of each man there that they know no-one would steal a religious object for any desire for cultic power. They are so sure that they offer the execution of the guilty man and the slavery of the rest if one is found to have done this. All the brothers jointly swear this before the servant, without the leadership of any one of them dominating, so all are united in their faith in each other's honesty and religious integrity now. This is a changed family to the one Joseph was sold from. They can stand with David in Psalms 7:1-10.

**Psalm 7:1-10** *"1. O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:  
2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.  
3. O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;  
4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy):  
5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.  
6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.  
7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.  
8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.  
9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.  
10. My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart."*

**Verses 10 – 12.** The servant then gives them the prepared verdict upon the guilty one, which is far less harsh than that suggested by the brothers. This is the clue that this has been hatched in advance by Joseph, for he has the sentence all ready to be pronounced. The sentence is clear; the guilty one will be a slave forever (Bond servant – never able to be set free for life), but the others will go free and can return home. This is not as serious as it could be, for death would be the norm, so it appears to be mild, and if the brothers have any resentment towards Benjamin, then it will come out, for his slavery means they all live! If they don't love him they may try to get him to accept this, or at least argue about it openly, but if they love their father and Benjamin they cannot accept this "mercy" on the part of Joseph. The sacks are opened from the oldest to the youngest and the cup is found in Benjamin's sack.

**Verses 13 – 15.** The brothers realise they have been set up now, but they have no idea who has the apparent malice against them. They are in greatest grief now and tear their clothes. They load their asses and head back towards Joseph's house, with Benjamin under arrest. Verse fourteen tells us that a leader has emerged now and it is Judah; the one who made himself surety for Benjamin. He has the responsibility and he takes it firmly and clearly here and is ready to do so unto death.

This man and the others have come a long way in their journey to truth and righteousness by this point. Joseph is waiting at home for their arrival and they come in and fall on their faces before him in abject fear and concern for their brother. They must face the full consequences for what they have done and do now what they failed to do to stop Joseph going

into slavery, for only then will Joseph know that they are changed men 100%. Do they have what we now call the Christ like humility of changed men? Philippians 2:5-13.

Joseph then states the obvious thing, given his name; that he is a prophet of God and they cannot fool him. He invites them to explain why they thought they could fool him and steal the cup and he would not know it and find it.

While Joseph keeps the conversation centred in the cup, it is actually about their trying to pretend he is dead, when he is not! They have written Joseph off, but God didn't, and he is there before them. They don't see it, but they will soon. Isaiah 55:9. Why do people think they can out play God? Why do limited human beings try to pretend about sin and hide it, when nothing is hidden from God? The Lord challenges us to be honest with him about everything. Deuteronomy 30:11-21, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

**Verses 16 – 17.** Judah approaches Joseph and speaks on behalf of the group. Judah takes corporate responsibility and makes two things clear in his initial words. Firstly he is determined that all will suffer whatever befalls Benjamin; they will share his fate, whatever it is. They are totally united in their love and bond as brothers now. Secondly he makes it clear that they acknowledge that the Lord has found out their iniquity. Judah uses a strong word here and indicates that he believes (and the others by implication), that they are suffering this because they sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt.

They sinned against their brother and sold him into Egypt, and so in Egypt, God has brought them to judgment. They accept that they are in Joseph's hands, but even more they are in God's hands. Judah does not try to explain anything away, he is silent before the accusation, for they have no explanations, just acceptance that God is working his purposes out, and it is all beyond them, but they accept God's will.

**Verses 18 – 20.** Joseph has repeated, verse 17, that only the guilty one is to stay as a slave, and the others are free to go. This is being said the second time as a test to them all, but they are now united in purpose and love for Benjamin. They will share his fate whatever it is. Judah bows again and takes his life in his hands to speak again, and he acknowledges this by saying to Joseph, "you are as Pharaoh". It is a way of reminding him self that if he messes up here he dies. Judah then tells the story of their return from Canaan and the things said by old Jacob.

He speaks with genuine affection of his father, and this must have warmed Joseph's heart, because these men had been on the wrong side of Jacob's favouritism of Joseph. Now as older men themselves they see and feel nothing but love for their father, and they understand his love for Joseph and Benjamin now, as the sole survivors of their mother, who has died. They feel the tragedy that Jacob felt at Rachel's death and the reasons for his favouritism. Even though Jacob was wrong, the others now see that this "problem" of their father should not have led them to plan murder. They see that they sinned against love, and they feel it's deep bitterness now as they weep and plead for the life of Benjamin.

Judah is respectful to Joseph, calling him "my Lord" several times, reflecting again the fulfilment of Joseph's dream, but also Judah's acceptance that he is totally in this man's hands, and through this man, in God's hands. The brothers have written Joseph off as dead by now. They have no hope that he has lived, and they all feel the deep burden of their guilt before God. Judah had moved to the plains for twenty years to escape this reality, and lived the high life with his friend the Canaanite, but he has returned to the family encampment, and he has faced his sin as he grows older. As men draw closer to death they often confront the deeds of their younger days and as they contemplate meeting their maker their sins have no appeal, but making their peace with God does.

**Verses 21 – 28.** Judah tells Joseph that it was he who asked of their father and their younger brother and it is in response to his request that Benjamin is there today. Judah makes it clear that the loss of this boy will bring death to their father, just as Joseph's loss nearly killed him twenty eight years before this time. He makes it clear that Jacob only released the boy to come to Egypt because the family is in such dire straights with the famine in the land. They also tell Joseph what Jacob's conclusion about his fate was; that he was torn apart by wild animals.

In God's sight the truth is quite close to this, for the brothers acted like wild animals in their dealings with Joseph. Their guilt and distress is extreme here, but it needs to be, for the Lord seeks honesty in our confrontation with our sins, and these men will have every gram of hypocrisy and self righteousness purged from their souls by this experience. Look at the words of the psalmist in Psalms 51:1-17, 88:1-9, and see the depth of emotion and thought in their confession of sin, their despair about what it did to them, and their joy in the Lord as their redeemer.

**Verses 29 – 34.** To fail to return with the boy is to kill their own father. These men face the terrible guilt of the thought that they have killed their own brother, and they cannot face this ultimate disgrace of killing their father also. They now see that sin which is not faced grows in it's destructive power and they cast themselves upon Joseph's mercy for their brother and their father's life. Judah then offers himself for his brother, in accordance with his promise to his father before their trip. His life is formally offered for Benjamin's life. Judah stands where the Lord Jesus Christ stood for us all, and his actions here illustrate where we need to stand before the Lord and our own brethren; ever ready to put others before ourselves, even to die for them. James 4:11, 5:7-11, 1 Peter 1:22-25, 3:8-17, 1 John 2:7-11, 3:13-24.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Judah has matured in his understanding of the meaning of family love, and he is ready to place his body on the line for his brother. Love for the brethren is a living sign of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. It is this sign that ought to be present in our lives. If there is no love for other believers there is no spiritual presence in us.
2. The brothers have started to learn that they are helpless before the Lord. They have started to see that their hope rests in the Lord alone. We have no source of deliverance from any trouble other than the Lord's deliverance of us. We are called to cast all our cares upon Him, for he alone cares for us and has the power to deliver. We are called to "Faith-Rest" upon the holy and dependable character of Almighty God, and the multiple promises of God's Holy Word.
3. Christian leadership requires stepping out to the front to take the pressures of the entire group. Christian leadership is sacrificial leadership and always requires the pastor-teacher to be ready to suffer for his people and set the example of suffering in faith and confidence before the Lord. See the important lessons the brothers have to learn about their sin, and about God's education process to bring them back to living fellowship with Him.

**Notes**

## **CHAPTER 45**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In Genesis 45 Joseph's brothers have been tested, making sure that they have learned the lessons that they had to learn. This consisted of recognizing their sin and seeing the need to be true and honest to God. In verse 1 Joseph sends out everybody other than his brothers so that he could have the private and emotional discussion with them and reveal himself to them. His love for his brothers is now able to come out, for they have come to the place of full repentance. There are some people who, because of their carnality, you are not able to love, other than from afar, but at this point Joseph's brothers have returned to the Lord, so he was now able to reveal himself to them and show love to them without their response being hypocritical or fake.

### **RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS**

He is able to show that the man they sold into slavery is now running Egypt. He tells them not to be afraid or angry with themselves, for God has sent him before them in his wonderful plan to preserve their lives. He says that he has been sent in advance to save the patriarchs from starvation. He is able to give a great testimony as to what God has done. He does not minimize their sins. This is a wonderful picture of some of the doctrines of SALVATION, THE SIN BARRIER, JUSTIFICATION, and RECONCILIATION.

When you come to reconciliation it is important that you do not minimize the sin that has caused the fracture. Deal with it honestly. God had a plan in this as in all things, but that does not mean we excuse the sin, or fail to confront it fully. Romans 8:28 operates within the sphere of 1 John 1:5-10.

Joseph now gives them a short talk on the significance of the principle behind Romans 8:28. The same principle works for us as well, with God being able to bring blessing out of cursing. God has been working His purpose out regarding this and you all are going to be blessed because of this says Joseph.

He tells them to go and get their father quickly and that they will go to live in the land of Goshen so that they will be close to Joseph. Also he tells them that this is only the very early years of a seven year famine. He is repeating himself a number of times here because the brothers are in shock. They think about all the lies that have been told in the past. Their father, Jacob, believes that Joseph is dead. Sin begets sin. These people have lived a lie for almost thirty years. They are going to have a lot of thinking to do as they travel up to Canaan on their asses as to how they are going to tell their father what has happened. Joseph and Benjamin wept together as they were so happy to be together again. After this Joseph let them know that they had all been forgiven. This is the pattern that we see in James 1:22 - 27.

**James 1:22-27** *"22. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

*23. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

*24. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

*25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

*26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

*27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

So you have been wronged, then show your maturity by forgiving. James 5:16. In Galatians 6:1ff, we are told that if you think yourself as mature as a believer, then you are challenged to show your maturity by helping those who have been caught up in sin. Do not take things personally, even when they are meant personally, for you relax in the Lord's hands and do what he directs. We follow doctrine not emotion! Joseph demonstrates maturity in his forgiveness and grace, and so do we.

Joseph now talks about the Lord, as he has a right relationship with the Lord, and his desire is that his brothers have their relationship with the Lord restored fully, just as it has been with him. In many churches you will find "make believers" who do not have that relationship, and will be embarrassed about talking about the Lord. We should be happy about what the Lord is doing in our lives and be willing to share this with others. When a person is not overjoyed to speak of the Lord, they do not know him! In liberal churches where ministers may not be born again believers, the church always dies over time, because there is no love for the Lord and people do not speak much of him.

**Malachi 3:16-18.** *"16. Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

*17. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

*18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."*

Pharaoh is very pleased because Joseph has got his family back. He confirms that he is going to give them the best grazing land in Egypt and says that he will make sure that they are treated as princes in Egypt. They are to bring everything down and that if there is anything they have to leave behind, they are not to worry about that, that he will make it up to them. Thus the family of Joseph is told that they are welcome. They came on asses and went back on wagons and were given provisions for the way there and back again.

They were also given a change of clothes. Clothes in the ancient world were very expensive, with a set of clothing taking up several months wages to purchase. Benjamin was given five sets of garments and 300 pieces of silver. This was another test on his brothers to ensure that they did not get jealous. Joseph sent a large amount of goods up with them to Canaan, ten asses loaded up with corn and dried meat. He tells them to see that they do not fall by the way. Do not delay, do not fall out with one another. They have a week's journey back to Jacob. He is very direct with them, for he knows human psychology. "Do not argue with one another. Do not get jealous of one another."

With confession of sin you speak directly to God about your wrong doing - 1 John 1:9. If you have wronged your brother you must set it right later; first you set yourself right with God. These men have therefore got to face their father with these things. Confession of sin does not give you a license to sin, nor does it free you of the consequences of your sins, for it is facing the one (God) whom you have wronged. They arrived home to tell Jacob that Joseph was alive and Jacob did not believe them. He believed the lie until they had got through all the details. This motivates Jacob to go and see Joseph before he dies. He is still depressed but much of the depression is of his own making and it will lift as he obeys the command of his son and goes down to Egypt.

#### JACOB BECOMES REVITALISED SPIRITUALLY

Jacob has failed more than he has succeeded in his past spiritual life but he bounces back now. In verse 27 he is called Jacob whilst in the following verse he is called Israel meaning Prince of God, so he is back on the track. This reminds us that it is never too late for a person to bounce back to spiritual life. If we are alive there is hope. He offers sacrifices to God. He had delayed sending them back into Egypt but now that he is back in fellowship he starts back on the correct path. When you have been out of fellowship with the Lord your life will be miserable. During the last years however Jacob, who should have been enjoying his grandchildren, has been worrying about his sons. He has been a poor father and he has reaped the reward for it, but God in grace has delivered him and them all.

God tells Jacob that when he dies Joseph will close his eyes, which was the responsibility of the eldest son. It is God's way of telling Jacob that he will have dying grace. In effect God is saying, "You have not enjoyed your life as you should have, because of your carnality, but you will enjoy your dying and your death will be without fear". It is a wonderful thing to think upon that we are dying in Christ Jesus. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, Jeremiah 15:1, 24:4-7.

**GENESIS 45:1-28**

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: 11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him. 16 And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. 17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; 18 And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your's. 21 And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. 23 And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. 24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. 25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26 And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 3.** Joseph is beside himself with overflowing emotion towards his brothers. He is overwhelmed by them. It was not normal for the Egyptian pharaohs to show emotion, for they were seen to be god like, and so stable and calm in the midst of the fluctuating emotions of lesser men and women. They were seen to be above such things. Joseph maintains his dignity by sending all the Egyptians out of the room, including his guards, officials, and servants. It is a reminder that he was a senior cabinet minister of the greatest nation on earth, and they had a large "court".

This meeting between Joseph and his brothers is in a palace hall with possibly several hundred others present. Moses speaks of this casually, for to him it is a normal thing, as he also was a prince of Egypt, but we need to see the little clues Moses gives to the numbers of people involved. He sends everyone away, but his officials stand by the outer door and they hear his weeping aloud and his words to his brothers, and these are later reported to pharaoh.

He weeps aloud and is not ashamed of his tears. Joseph's weeping here is an expression of joy and happiness, the normal outpouring of great emotion towards these men who he loves, but they are not expecting this, nor the fact he then reveals to them, and they are in total shock.

Joseph reveals himself to them by name, speaking now their own language without an interpreter. He announces a truth they have long ago ceased to believe in; their brother is alive and very well indeed! They had written Joseph off, but he is the centre of God's plan for them and their survival as a people. Their shock is a prophetic picture for Israel, as in a future day the descendants of these men will weep for the one they rejected for two thousand years, but who is still the centre of God's plan for their deliverance and eternal destiny. Daniel 9:25-27, Zechariah 12:10-14, 13:6, Acts 9:1-6.

**Daniel 9:25-27.** *"25. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*

*26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.*

27. *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”*

**Zechariah 12:10-14.** *“10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

*11. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*

*12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

*13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;*

*14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”*

**Acts 9:1-6.** *“1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,*

*2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.*

*3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:*

*4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*

*5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

*6. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.”*

**Verses 4 – 6.** Joseph has to repeat his message to them all, their shock is so great. For nearly thirty years since that terrible day when they ignored his cries for deliverance, they have believed they had killed him. Their evil has become their deliverance, as the one they refused to deliver from slavery, sets them free from bondage to the famine, and to their fears and guilt. The truth alone sets us free, and so note how specific Joseph is in his words!

They will be healed by Joseph of the physical and emotional scars this day. He very specifically names their great sin of selling him into slavery, and directs them to God who has delivered him, and who can forgive and deliver them from their Old Sin Natures. Joseph is focused upon their emotional state and tries by his words to heal their wounds, even though they were self inflicted ones. This is what forgiveness does! Joseph gives them the gracious orders of the mature believer; “do not grieve over your sins, but rather, deal with them, and do not blame yourselves any longer, but see what God has done with your actions”. They are challenged to get God’s perspective on their shock and sadness, rather than stay with their guilt ridden emotions. Putting the guilt of our great sins behind us can be harder than confessing at times.

He reminds them that the famine has only been going for two years now and there are five years to run of this great period of suffering. They didn't just send him into Egypt as a slave, God has actually been in this, and has sent him before them to ensure they are all delivered. They are part of the plan of God and as such they will be cared for, and have been, even while they were away from their Lord and God. Remind yourself of the wonderful grace you have as a part of God’s plan. You are kept even when in carnality, but blessing starts to flow again as you deal with your sins and return to living and blessed fellowship through confession and spiritual growth again.

**Verses 7 – 9.** Joseph directs them to the actions of God in all the things that have happened. They have meant things for evil, but God has worked all things out for good. They will still doubt Joseph’s forgiveness of them and after their father’s death they will fear him again. So deeply do they feel their sin. It is not a bad thing to feel guilt when it is real, for it can keep us from greater sin later, but guilt must not be left unchecked. It must be brought before the Lord and left there, for we are forgiven, and so we are called to forgive others, and ourselves! Psalms 103:8-17, Matthew 6:12-15, Mark 11:25-26, Luke 6:37, 2 Corinthians 2:7-10.

**Verses 10 – 12.** Joseph has already planned where the family will be able to be resettled, for the famine and the years afterwards. The area he has set aside is the delta pasture lands of Goshen, close by to the capital of Lower Egypt, that was where these Pharaoh’s ruled from in this dynasty. Joseph wants them close to him and this part of the land would be the only part that would support their surviving flocks and herds. In that place Joseph will ensure that they do not come to any harm, nor suffer from the effects of the famine that will continue to sweep through the lands around them for another five years. The brothers are still in great shock and are standing there with their mouths open. Joseph then directly addresses Benjamin and speaks to him and calls him to hear his words and recognize his older brother.

**Verses 13 – 15.** Moses now tells of the tender meeting and briefly refers to the hugging and weeping that went on. The brothers have heard they are forgiven, and would have said many things to Joseph that is quietly and respectfully glossed over by Moses. This is a very private moment for them all. Even though each, I suspect, would have given his tearful apology, as we have seen above, they will still later fear that they are to be judged later.

Men who are not used to grace find it hard to accept, but at this point they will be shaking with many emotions, and their tears and relief will be palpable. Their relief must have been enormous at this point, for all their questions about their dealings with Joseph over the last year are answered, and it is only later that their fears will re-emerge, and then only after their father’s death. Genesis 50. Joseph makes it clear to them that his priority is that their father be brought down

to Egypt as soon as possible. The borders of the land of Egypt will be closed soon, in order to stop foreigners arriving in large numbers due to the famine in their lands.

**Verses 16 – 20.** Pharaoh hears of everything that happens in Joseph's household, for spying on the cabinet was an art form in Egypt! Every one who exercised any power at all was spied upon by their masters in the ancient world and none were offended at it. Pharaoh is very happy with the news his spies bring to him and he formally backs Joseph's desires.

Notice the Pharaoh tells them exactly what they are to do, and also ensures by his proclamation that they are able to take all that they need to bring their families down in comfort. He tells them that they are not to bring everything down, and anything worn, torn or ugly is to be left behind. They are not to be sentimental about their possessions and cling to things that are worn and useless, for all they need and are short of will be made up by the supply centres of Pharaoh. It is a polite way to ask them not to bring old stuff into the land of Egypt! If it is fit for the dump they are to leave it in the dump of Canaan, not pollute the land of Egypt. The same applies in the church jumble sale!

I am always amazed at those who cling to old possessions that will not have any value later as antiques; it is as if their security is in being surrounded by familiar things. Remember we are challenged again and again in scripture to not be attached to things, but focused upon our eternal destiny. Things are to be used for the Lord's service and our lives, but once they are past their "use by date" they are to be discarded, and that doesn't mean, when they are useless that they are given to the church! The best is for the Lord and the worn out is for the dump! Deuteronomy 15:21, Malachi 3:8, Romans 6:2-13, Colossians 2:20, 3:3.

Pharaoh challenges them to faith here. They are to step out and trust him and come to Egypt quickly and he will look after them. Speed will be important for this move, for once it is known that this extended family is heading for Egypt there may be a rush of other pastoralists to join them. If they delay and say farewells and make a big deal of leaving, the news will spread of their invitation to Egypt, and the borders of Egypt might be over run by people seeking shelter from the famine. They are to slip away quietly and head for Egypt without anyone knowing where they are going.

Pharaoh is smart enough not to take all refugees, lest they become a security problem. Rulers cannot be ruled themselves by care for people of other nations, or they will create security problems for their own, and may create the collapse of their own economy. This has happened in many places through the centuries, where refugees have overwhelmed the social fabric of neighbours and destroyed the economy of their neighbours. Egypt looks as blasted and desolate as everywhere else, and only if a traveller sees the granaries would they know that Egypt has ample grain, and that is why the brothers have been vetted by Joseph – the Egyptians are taking no chances that the news that they have excessive supplies will get out to people groups who might invade later.

A ruler may show compassion, but it must be first to their own people, and then be measured to others lest they destroy the nation. The borders are likely to be closed from this point on until the end of the famine, as all that will happen if the news of food in Egypt gets out, is that they will be invaded by desperate people groups. The army of Egypt will be on the borders to stop that happening over the next years, and the people being fed by Joseph may be building defences in return for their bread. The instructions to the brothers are specific and the brothers of Joseph are fully briefed; they are to arrive in Canaan on day one, and leave on day two, without any fuss, publicity, farewells, or fanfare. They are not to draw undue attention to them selves.

**Verses 21 – 24.** Joseph is in charge of execution of Pharaoh's orders regarding the wagons, as he would have many for the work he has done over the previous nine years. Ample wagons are provided for all the families to travel in some comfort, and the animals to pull them and the teams of men to drive them. These wagons are old grain wagons, suitable for a trading caravan, they are not formal and golden chariots. All this is in addition to the asses that the brothers have brought down with their men, for all these are loaded with food supplies of all kinds to ensure the families are fully fed and healthy during their trip down to Egypt.

The wagons are also loaded with presents and clothing for the families; Egyptian clothing so that they will fit in within their new land when they arrive in it. Once they are there, they are no longer to dress as the wandering pastoralists but as servants of the pharaoh of Egypt. They are to fit into their new society and work alongside the Egyptian locals. They are not just guests, but family of pharaoh now.

Benjamin is given three hundred pieces of silver, many more pieces of silver than Joseph was sold for. Genesis 37:28. He is also given five changes of clothing, and this is not favouritism but repayment for all the lost years when he missed out on life because his father was so scared that his brothers would "lose" him, as they "lost" Joseph. It is also a test to the brothers, to ensure there is no vestige of jealousy amongst them towards Joseph or Benjamin. God always makes good any apparent losses we experience in his service. Joel 2:25, Philippians 4:11-13.

**Verses 25 – 28.** The several week trip back would have been a mixture of joy and apprehension, for they have lied to their father for thirty years about Joseph and now they must confess their great past evil. Their father will be relieved but also deeply saddened by their news, for he feels the consequences of his earlier favouritism. Jacob has brought the suffering upon himself, but the brothers bear the responsibility totally, as is right before God, for they let jealousy get hold of their hearts and became in effect murderers.

The brothers tell their father that Joseph is alive and well and now governor over all the land of Egypt. It is a shock to the old man, and he nearly has a heart attack on the spot. Literally, his heart “froze”, for he could not take the news in and believe it. They tell him the words of Pharaoh and Joseph regarding the travel immediately that they are to undertake, and they can point to the Egyptian wagons and the clothing and food gifts; all far more than would be normal for a trade transaction. He can see the evidence that he is called for. Some ask a powerful question at this point. Why didn't Joseph go himself to bring his father down in style? There are several things that emerge from this that have relevance to Christian service.

**Firstly**, Joseph is second ruler of Egypt and has responsibilities that cannot be laid aside to undertake personal errands. Remember Jesus words, “let the dead bury their dead”. These words are harsh yet must be taken into account, for they are the words of the Lord. Matthew 8:22, Luke 9:60. When we serve the Lord in a great matter it is to be our sole focus and no family entanglements are to get in the way.

Care for family is legitimate and required of all believers; if we do not look after our dependent relatives as we are able we disgrace the name of the Lord. What the Lord's words mean is that we are not to be side tracked from our task by things others can do. 1 Timothy 5:8, 2 Timothy 2:4. Joseph can leave his brothers to bring their father down, for he has great matters of State to attend to daily, but his brothers are free and can care for their father. Also they need to face their father with their sin against Joseph and himself and it is right that they have privacy to address that.

**Secondly**, the journey to and from Canaan needs to be done quietly, without drawing too much attention from wandering tribes, or desperate people seeking food and shelter in Egypt. Joseph has provided the old heavy grain wagons and they will not draw attention to the caravan as special, or a target in any way, for they are simply trading. There are ample armed men to guard the company against desert tribes. He does not want any official Egyptian presence in the caravan least others think they can come down to Egypt and the nation be over run. Egyptian drivers of the wagons would not be a problem for trade between Canaan and Egypt was daily camel, ass and wagon trains both ways.

When the borders are later closed no-one around Egypt will think anything about it either, for all nations are affected by the famine and the borders of nations were often closed due to civil unrest. Unrest will be common around the eastern Mediterranean by the third year of the famine, and vast numbers will die of this famine. The borders will need to be closed until the surrounding nations are so debilitated that they are no longer a threat to Egypt. This is harsh, but necessary, for it means survival for Egypt without fighting great migrations of hungry and desperate people. If a vast migration occurred there would be carnage in Egypt. The news of Joseph's great coup in having grain for Egypt's people must be kept secret from all outside the land.

**Thirdly**, Joseph cannot travel, as an important and key man, without a large retinue. He is simply too valuable to pharaoh, and would travel within Egypt with several hundred/thousand soldiers of the elite guards regiment at all times around him. Assassination was common in the ancient world and so travel as a “private individual” was out for all who held such an office as Joseph held. He has no rights to private travel in his role. That is the price of fame, as some today still discover. There is a price to pay to live in palaces, and this is the price he had to pay. He could not please himself. John 8:29, 1 Corinthians 7:32-34, Galatians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

**Fourthly**, for Joseph to enter Canaan was to enter another political sphere of influence. Canaan in this day was the meeting place of the Hittite Empire and the Egyptian Empire, and the city States of Canaan were the pawns to be played with in battles for power and influence in the region.

Joseph is second in command of the nation, and so for him to start to march in grand procession towards Canaan, was potentially to declare war on the city states of Canaan and threaten the Hittite Empire. It was to provoke a war to enter this region with an army. Spies abounded in the deserts of Sinai, and the various City States would pay a tribe to report all strange movements of potential enemy forces. A strongly armed caravan would not raise suspicion, but Joseph's presence would have. He simply could not enter Canaan again, except with a peaceful and powerful reason, and great diplomacy would be required; this will occur after the death of Jacob.

Note finally in this chapter Jacob's words as he accepts the words of the brothers. He is very depressed. Don't miss this observation, for Moses tells the story to allow us to see the mental state of the players throughout. Jacob is sad as he faces his death even though the prospect of meeting Joseph brings joy, but it is tinged with deep depression. He knows that he has made a complete mess of his family life, and it will only be in these last years that he will have rest and see his family operating well as a unit. There is always a price to pay for neglect in parenting and he pays it deeply, but while we live there is hope and this man will have joy and blessing in the end, due to the grace, mercy and love of God. We enjoy the same things, from the same source.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. We are used to quoting the words, “we are not our own, we are bought with a price, the precious blood of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23, 1 Peter 2:1. We often fail to follow the logic of these words through and see what it may mean if we are called to a “great matter” of service for the Lord. All our personal desires and plans, and even familial obligations are secondary to the great purpose the Lord has called us to. We meet our obligations to family by monetary or prayer means but we may not be attending the gatherings that family may expect. Our holidays and daily routines are all guided and controlled by the Lord's purposes, and our timetable is not our own.

Many wonder why the Lord does not use them more, but their schedule is so full that the Lord cannot get any time with them! Let us examine our timetables and bring everything into the Lord's control and so be blessed as he intends for us to be in his service. We may lose many earthly pleasures and activities in the Lord's service, but we will never lose out on blessing that lasts! The first may be last in the end, and the last may be first for eternity! Matthew 19:28-30, Mark 10:28-31.

2. Do not be afraid of emotions. Joseph weeps aloud at the meeting with his brothers, for joy and sadness. Emotions are bona fide expressions of the heart, but are not the guide for our thinking. They are designed by God to be enjoyed, but not to dominate our lives. Let us get things in their proper order and so enjoy our thoughts, our emotions and our actions.
3. We all need the Lord's perspective of the events of our lives, and to be freed from man's limited perspective. The Plan of God is for glory, not despair. If we despair it is because we are seeing things man's way, rather than God's way. People may mean things for evil, but in the plan of God they are turned for our good and the blessing of others also. God seeks to bless us, and anything else that is happening needs to be seen as a path to later blessing, for that is what the future will reveal all things to be. Let us see our temporary suffering as a path for glory, and seek the things in the midst of it to bring glory to God and blessing to ourselves and others. Romans 8:18, 38, Galatians 1:4, Hebrews 12:11ff.
4. Forgiveness is freely given to all who confess their sins and turn from evil. God means us to be free from sin and the guilt associated with it. We are forgiven by God, but often we need to be encouraged to forgive ourselves and keep moving forward. Let us not waste time on pointless guilt for past stupidity and even evil; let us truly repent of it, and prove that our repentance is real by moving forward to the glory of God.
5. Be loosely attached to your possessions. Once they have served their purpose give them away, or destroy them. Do not be a person surrounded by things, for they cannot save us from anything. Be a person attached only to the purposes of God for you, and your desire to serve Him. Use all you have for the Lord's work and desire no other things. Be content with the things that the Lord leads you to possess for his work. Remember, we leave every thing behind on this earth for others at our death; we take only the work done in the filling of the Holy Spirit with us into heaven.

#### **REFLECTIONS UPON THE DOCTRINAL TRUTH OF "DYING GRACE"**

1. We are all here upon the earth as in a "strange country"; we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and are not meant to be too comfortable here. We are not to be "attached" to the things of this world. Philippians 3:12-17, Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11.
2. Death is the strangest thing we confront on this earth; the weirdness of being here one minute, alive, alert and warm, then a second later, dead, cooling and inert. Death is meant to appear strange to us, for it is the evidence before us that we are not permanent inhabitants here, but simply playing out a part as we pass through. This is not a place we are meant to get attached to. We have an eternal destiny and that is to be our focus as we plod through our pilgrimage here.
3. The death of believers is a precious thing to the God who has given his life to save us from the judgment of sin and death. 1 Samuel 26:21, 2 Kings 1:13-14, Psalms 49:8, 72:14, 116:15, 1 Peter 1:7, 2:4. Refer Grace.
4. We all must die, but that is not the end for mankind, for God will judge us all and all will have eternal life, either with our creator and saviour, or in the place prepared for eternity for the devil and his angels and all who reject destiny with God. 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Hebrews 11:13, Revelation 20:10-15. The mature believer facing death sees right through it, to the other side where they meet with the Lord face to face. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10.
5. Dying grace is provided to all believers who are looking to their Lord as they die, for his perfect provision for each of us from eternity past has everything we need provided in advance of our life, let alone our death itself. There are no surprises to God, and all things we face have His provisions for them there to be claimed by faith. 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, 2 Peter 2:9, Jude 24-25.

**CHAPTER 46****INTRODUCTION****OLD ISRAEL BECOMES REVITALISED SPIRITUALLY**

Jacob has failed more than he has succeeded in the spiritual life but he bounces back now. In verse 27 he is called Jacob whilst in the following verse he is called Israel, which is Moses way of telling us that he is back on the track. He offers sacrifices to God. We have waited nearly thirty years of history to see him do this again. He had delayed sending them back into Egypt but now that he is back in fellowship he starts back on the correct path, and it is towards Egypt.

When you have been out of fellowship with the Lord your life will be miserable, but confession and restoration can be fast once you accept the truth. During the last years however Jacob, who should have been enjoying his grandchildren has been worrying about his sons. He has been a poor father and he has reaped the reward of it.

God tells Jacob that when he dies Joseph will close his eyes, which was the responsibility of the eldest son. It is God's way of telling Jacob that he will have dying grace. In effect God says to him, "You have not enjoyed your life as you should have but you will enjoy your death". It is a wonderful thing to think upon that we are dying in Christ Jesus. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, Jeremiah 15:1, 24:4-7.

**THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BECOME A SIGNIFICANT NATION**

There are apparently around 70 immediate family members who went down into Egypt. From these figures and the several hundred that were previously part of Isaac and Jacob's extended households we can see that there has been lack of blessing upon this family for the last few decades or years. They have either significantly shrunk in numbers through this period, or they leave all their slaves and servants as free behind in Canaan. We cannot be sure of this.

The seventy immediate family grow in the years in Egypt so that by the time of the Exodus this small group of people has grown to a nation of at least 30,000 or so. Jacob and the family are introduced to Pharaoh. The Egyptians did not like shepherds, as they were very refined people and did not like the smell of goats or sheep. People that spend their time out in the fields with goats, sheep or even cattle start to smell like them. We will also see that the figure seventy was an approximate figure only; for several of the names we are given in the lists here, were clearly born later than the arrival in Egypt described in this section.

This is why the change of clothes was provided for every family member, so that after they arrived, they were bathed and cleaned up, and dressed like Egyptians by the time of their meeting. This is the same as a person today receiving an audience with their head of State. They shower and get cleaned up, and they dress in appropriate formal clothing for the formal meeting. Respect for the nation's authority figures is a hallmark of the spiritual believer.

A dirty, smelly believer is a person who is out of step with God. We are ambassadors of the court of heaven, and any time we are meeting new people it is right that we dress and appear in the best possible way, and the most appropriate to the situation and person. We are ambassadors of the court of heaven upon the earth, and so we ought always to be well dressed and clean at very least, for we represent the King of kings and Lord of all lords.

Joseph introduces Jacob to Pharaoh and Jacob blesses Pharaoh in God's name. Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was and Jacob says 130. This is a significant reminder that you are never too old to serve God. If you are alive, there is a purpose for your remaining years and prayer is required to find and apply it. Spiritually Jacob has made a complete comeback by the time we enter this chapter.

The family are given an area to settle around the city of Ramses in the delta region. Joseph through the next years worked on the nationalization of much of the arable land on Egypt. If there was anyone in trouble from the famine, Joseph would say that he would help them out, but they had to surrender the title deed to their land to the crown in order to receive their food. When people had no land to sell they sold their labour and Egypt got all the public works it needed to remain great for several hundred years after Joseph.

Remember, as we have seen before, Genesis 42:3, the grain was taxed and likely bought, and then sold back to the people. It was fair both ways, without inflated prices, so those who had not saved in the plentiful years were left with only their land as equity. Joseph would sell them grain to live, but their land was sold to pharaoh to pay for the grain if they had not saved in the times of plenty. In this way most of the land of Egypt came under the Pharaoh's direct control. This laid the foundation for Egyptian greatness in the future years of this dynasty.

Many people say nationalization is a bad, or communist thing, but here however, we have one of the greatest of believers practicing it. It is a reminder that we have to make sure that we do not make business statements that the Bible can refute. By this economic means Joseph made Egypt, in the midst of a famine, into the most prosperous nation in the then known world. The people who previously owned the land rented it back from pharaoh and worked it again when the

rains came back into Africa and the Nile flooded once more. Stability was maintained without charity, by sound economic practise. The land became the source of food, even after it bore no food itself.

We get attached to land, yet it's ownership is an almost "mythical" thing, for at death we leave it all behind. Land title regularly changes with new conquerors of the land through the centuries. In England the British tribes lost their land title to the Romans, then the Romano-British lost title to the Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Danes, and then their title was extinguished by the Normans. Since that day there has been stability, but that is just "for a time", as all the arrangements of man are. Let us focus our eyes upon the secure title of eternity that we all have in Christ Jesus. John 14:1-4.

**GENESIS 46:1-34**

**"1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. 2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. 5 And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him: 7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. 8 And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn. 9 And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi. 10 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman. 11 And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12 And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul. 13 And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron. 14 And the sons of Zebulun; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel. 15 These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padanaram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three. 16 And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli. 17 And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel. 18 These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls. 19 The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin. 20 And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 21 And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Mupim, and Hupim, and Ard. 22 These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen. 23 And the sons of Dan; Hushim. 24 And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem. 25 These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. 26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six; 27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten. 28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. 31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32 And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians."**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 4.** Moses uses the name Israel to remind us that old Jacob has well and truly bounced back into the spiritual walk that he has been away from all these years. It is a reminder that even at 130 years of age it is not too late to turn back to the Lord if you are still alive. While we live there is hope for us and for our fulfilling of the Lord's plan for us.

Old Israel dedicates this great move to the Lord. He is in fear and doubt, for to leave the land of promise is to step away from the revelation of the Lord to Abraham, and so secure guidance is required before Israel believes he is to follow the clear encouragement of Joseph and his other sons. Circumstances involving the famine make it logical to head down to Egypt when asked to, but Israel seeks further confirmation of the Lord, for he has been away from the daily walk with God for so long now that he needs real assurance before moving. This is not a bad thing in itself, but it reflects his lack of fellowship over the last thirty years.

Abraham received the promise that in Canaan would be the blessing for his descendents and so staying in Canaan, and trusting in the Lord's provision there, would be the spiritual thing to do. Genesis 15:13-16. Israel recognizes, now that he is back in the place of faith, that impossible situations are to be seen as simply challenges to faith, and that believers are to seek the Lord's path through a problem, if we seek the road of safety and blessing. It was right for him to build the altar

and pray, as he now knows that the Lord can preserve him in or out of Canaan, and he seeks the Lord's will now alone. God honours his godly doubts about leaving the land of promise and confirms the path forward to Egypt is the right one.

This is the reminder to us all, that even when a situation appears to be very clear, we are to pause, reflect upon the Word received previously, and pray for confirmation if there are any doubts at all about direction. The Lord wants us to walk carefully and prayerfully. Let us live bible study and prayer saturated lives.

Israel moves camp from Hebron to Beersheba. This will not excite any surprise amongst the other pastoralists, and the pause in Beersheba is a normal one, as it was the place of Abraham and Isaac's sojourning also for extended times. Genesis 21:14-31, 22:19, 26:23, 33, 28:10.

This was the place where altars had been built and so he builds again the ancient altar and offers prayers here. He spiritually returns to the place of God's revelation. It is here that he has a dream in the night, and hears the voice of God giving him similar re-assurance to that which he received at Beth-El on the way to Haran all those years ago. Genesis 28:12ff.

Moses must feel strange as he writes this, for the Lord speaks to him the same way, Exodus 3:4ff, and his response is that of Israel. Moses recognizes as he writes these things that he stands in the tradition of Israel his ancestor, and has the same promises to rest upon as Israel did. We also share this, and can share the faith of Moses, as we apply ourselves to the Word of God and apply it into our daily life. 1 Peter 1:8-12.

God calls Israel by his given name, Jacob, as a reminder that he is called in his weakness, so that through the truth of God he might become strong. He is reminded that he is a man who needs the grace and power of God to achieve anything before God. He is also reminded that God is the Lord of all, and is the one who steps into history. The creator speaks to his creatures and operates within this world, and his plan encompasses all things that go on here.

We are not just the "visited planet", but the place where God regularly meets with men and women who are called to play their part in his eternal plan into which they are woven by faith in Christ Jesus. God speaks today, as he always has done, regularly through his Word and through prayer, and occasionally through prophetic words and gifting.

The promise is that just as God has been with Isaac, just so he will be with him, and that he is going to be accompanied down to Egypt, and that God will work with him to bring about the fulfilment of all the promises there. The nation will become great within the land of Egypt. He will be able to rest in the grace provision of the Lord for his descendents, and Joseph will close his eyes in death. This was the traditional role of the oldest son, but Joseph as the senior man of God given power in the family, and as God's chosen leader and deliverer, he will fulfil this role in Egypt.

**Verses 5 – 7.** Notice the words of Moses carefully here. Notice firstly that they took all their goods and their cattle. For the first time there is no mention of flocks, although we will see that later they re-appear. They have apparently sold their sheep and goats. All smelly professions are disgusting to the refined Egyptians, and shepherds are an abomination particularly to the Egyptians, Genesis 43:32, 45:10, 46:34.

If you read these three verses and put them together you see a subtle change in Joseph's realisation about how the family are to "market" themselves to the Pharaoh. They will not bring their flocks to Egypt, but cattle only, for they were sacred to the Egyptians. They will be able to sell the majority of their flocks, for sheep and goats can survive severe droughts, so there will be a market for them in Canaan. They bring the money made from the sale, but not any sheep or goats. All the people travel down, with the women and children, and the old people in the wagons, and the men walking, leading the animals, or riding on their asses. Their servants are apparently left behind, from the general list of people given here.

They are to bring the "goods", that is the clothing, furniture and silver and gold they have gathered while working the land, but not anything that the Egyptians will find disgusting. Now this involves a setting aside of "cultural values" and adjusting to the demands of the dominant culture amongst whom they will dwell for the next three hundred years. In today's world we are used to arguments for multi-culturalism, with tolerance for all minority groups. That is not the biblical picture we see here.

As believers we must be ready to cast aside the ancestral practises of centuries to fit in with the people the Lord has led us to live amongst and witness to. We must swim as fish in the cultural sea we find ourselves in, not expect those people to accept us "as we are". This is a big ask today, as it was then, and the Israelites will have difficulties with this, as we will see below.

There is to be no arrogance about cultural practises, by way of clothing, custom, or work. The only thing that does not change is belief system, although it's expression may alter in the new context. This is the picture we will see emerging throughout scripture; focus is always upon the plan of God and fitting in to that. Any change to be made to be obedient to the details of the plan is made without complaint or sadness for an old habit or cultural practise that is to be put aside. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Philipians 3:4-11.

**Verses 8 – 15.** The first list of names involves the descendents of Jacob and Leah. As the senior wife she has priority in the lists. The names are given in birth order, with relevant sons. The names listed here are all those who will establish clans amongst the tribes, so the men named have descendents who are named after them as independent

family groups. It will be noted that two daughters only are named in the lists. This was not because of the low value of women; for that is not biblical, but because these two women had major roles to play in the family. Several grand-sons of Jacob are listed here, for they establish tribes or sub-tribes as significant by Moses day to those established by the other sons.

Leah's sons are listed now. **Firstly Reuben**, and then his sons are mentioned as men establishing clans within the tribe of Reuben. They are, Hanoch, meaning to be initiated (same name as Enoch), Phallu, meaning "to divide", Hezron, meaning "the court yard", and Carmi, meaning "gardener". There may be little personal and family reasons behind these names, but none indicate any spiritual significance.

**Secondly the line of Simeon** is given. His sons establishing separate clans within his tribe are, Jemuel, meaning "day of God", Jamin, meaning "right hand" – possibly meaning my right hand or my later strength, Ohad, meaning "to be united", Jachin, meaning "he will establish", and Zohar, meaning "dazzling whiteness". His son Shaul (meaning "asked for") is mentioned separately, as born illegitimately of a Canaanite woman, but within the tribe he establishes an accepted clan in his own right.

It is a reminder that being born in an inappropriate manner does not reflect upon the child, and through his relationship with the promises of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the child becomes a full member of the community. There are personal names here, but also some indication of spiritual aspects of Simeon's life in the naming of some of the sons.

The **third son is Levi** (Moses own ancestor – Exodus 2). His sons are Gershon, meaning "a refugee", Kohath, meaning "alliance – to ally oneself", and Merari, meaning "bitter". The names of Levi's boys do not tell us much about Levi, other than his negativity perhaps.

**The fourth son is Judah**, whose sons are Er and Onan, who both died, as we saw in Genesis 38. His surviving sons, from whom the families of the later nation that bore his name derive, are Shelah, meaning "request", and the twins, Pharaz, meaning, "a breech – breaking forth", and Zarah, meaning, "rising of light". The family of Pharez also becomes a major sub group of the tribe and his two sons are counted with their uncles as leaders of the clans of Judah; they are Hezron, meaning, "the court-yard", and Hamul, meaning, "pitied". Moses does not know it, but the line of kings of Judah will come from the sons of Judah, through Pharez and Hezron. Matthew 1:3, Luke 3:33.

Variations in spelling of names crop up in this case, and is not a problem, for the Bible was written later in Hebrew, a language that has not been formed in it's final form for another 600+ years after the days of Jacob. Languages change their forms through the centuries. These names are probably Akkadian in their form at this point, as this was likely the written language of the tablets Moses inherits and edits/writes up as the Pentateuch during the wanderings in the desert.

**The fifth son is Issachar** whose sons are, Tola, meaning, "worm", Phuvah, meaning, "a blast of wind", Job, meaning, "howler", and Shimron, meaning, "preserved, guardianship".

The **sixth son is Zebulon**, whose sons are, Sered, meaning, "trembling", Elon, meaning "oak – strong tree", and Jahleel, meaning, "expectant of God". This ends the list of the sons of Leah, that she gave birth to while they lived in Padan-Aram (the city of Haran). She also gave birth to a named daughter Dinah. There were other girls in this branch of the family, for a total of this family of sons, and key grand-sons and daughters was thirty three (33) in number.

**Verses 16 – 18.** Next was the **seventh son, Gad**, born to Zilpah, the servant of Leah. Gad's sons were, Ziphion, meaning, "watch tower", Haggi, meaning "festive", Shuni, meaning, "quiet", Ezbon, meaning, possibly "grasping a finger", but this is uncertain, Eri, meaning "watchful", Arodi, meaning, "fugitive", and Areli, meaning, "a hero". These last two names may also refer to the places where the boys were born.

Also born to Zilpah was the **eighth son, Asher**. His son's names were, Jimnah, meaning, "prosperity", Ishuah, meaning, "God will level", Isui, meaning, "God will lend", and Beriah, meaning, "in trouble". They also had a sister, Serah (abundance). The sons of Beriah prospered to the extent that they also became sub clans within the tribe. Their names were, Heber, meaning, "community", and Malchiel, meaning, "king of God". Of the sons and key grandsons of Zilpah there were sixteen (16) clan leaders.

**Verses 19 – 22.** Rachel's two sons, Joseph and Benjamin also bore sons to carry on their names and the tribes of both were great at times in Israel's history, although the weakness of their mother for idolatry would overwhelm both households over time. The **ninth son, Joseph**, would have two sons and each would form a great tribe in themselves. Ephraim and Manasseh would become two tribes of power and influence and would give their name to the Northern Kingdom in the latter days of the kings, but it would be materialism, alcoholism, and idolatry that would bring them down to death. Both tribes would survive only as a remnant by fleeing south in the 720 BC to join the people of Judah.

Isaiah and Hosea preach repentance, but there is none amongst the majority and most perish in Assyrian captivity. A remnant of all the ten tribes is saved by fleeing south, and some more are saved through dispersion and return with the other Jews from Babylonian exile in 535 BC and later. Isaiah 28:1-3, Hosea 4:17ff. By the time of the early church the writers speak not of the three tribes, Judah, Levi and Benjamin, but of the "Twelve Tribes" again, telling us that enough survived from each to rebuild the tribes. Acts 26:7, James 1:1. In Revelation the writer describes the sealing of the Jewish evangelists as coming from all of the twelve tribes. Revelation 7:5-8.

The **tenth tribe was of Benjamin** was also a tribe afflicted by the sins of their mother Rachel. Their tribe nearly brings itself to total disaster in the days of the Judges due to its gross immorality and idolatry. Judges 19-21. The story in those chapters is an evil one, for “every man did as it seemed right in his own eyes”, and the result was total immorality and violence all around, but out of it came great blessing for Israel, for from this tribe would come one man, Saul, to become Paul of Tarsus; a man who would bring the message of the Messiah of all Israel to its people far and wide around the known world.

The sons of Benjamin are listed here, and can only have been born in Egypt, for he would not have been old enough to have all these boys when he entered Egypt. He has sons called, Belah, meaning, “destruction”, a place name, Becher, meaning, “early fruit – youth”, Ashbel, meaning, “flowing”, Gera, meaning, “grain”, Naaman, meaning, “pleasantness”, Ehi, meaning, “brotherly”, Rosh, meaning, “to shake the head”, Muppim, meaning, “waving”, Huppim, meaning, “chambers”, and Ard, meaning, to wander – fugitive”. Of the grand-sons, spoken of as “sons of Rachel” there were fourteen (14).

**Verses 23 – 25.** The next tribes were the descendents of Bilhah the servant of Rachel. They form the **Eleventh tribe, whose father was Dan**. His son was Hushim, meaning, “hasters”.

The **twelfth son was Naphtali**, whose sons were Jahzeel, meaning, “God will assign (blessing)”, Guni, meaning, “protected one”, Jezer, meaning, “purpose in mind”, and Shilem, meaning “recompense”. The key descendents of Bilhah were seven in number (7).

The grand total of all was 70, but this clearly includes some of those, of Jacob’s grand-sons and even great grand-sons, born in Egypt also. They were looked upon as coming into Egypt “within the loins of their fathers”. (The Latin phrase is often used to discuss this – in lumbis patrum).

In Middle Eastern thinking, the grand-sons yet to be born were in their fathers as they entered the land. Moses uses this concept to list the key sub-tribe (clan) leaders of the families that will march out with him. He has seventy sub-groups within the twelve tribes, and I suspect it is one man from the leadership of each sub-group that makes the first Sanhedrin that he appoints. Exodus 1:5, 24:1-9, Numbers 11:16-25.

**Verses 26 – 29.** Seventy becomes a key number for the nation as it advances into the land after the Exodus. In the study of numerology, the Jewish people considered the number 3 to stand as the divine number, 4 as the number of the world. Added together as seven this signifies the joining of God’s purpose with the will of men upon the earth. The entire number is multiplied by 10, which is the complete number, and this means the plan of God in this case is complete and encompasses the covenant people who will complete the plan. Some of these men listed are born after the entry into Egypt, and in at least one case involve a great-grand-son of Jacob, when we compare the list of names in Numbers 26.

In the family of Benjamin for example, he was too young to have had ten sons by the time of entry into Egypt. He could have been as young as 23 years at the time of coming down to Egypt. The list of sons in Numbers 26: 38-40, records him finally having eight sons and two grand-sons who are mentioned/recorded as tribal leaders. In later Jewish thought, as well as amongst the Arab people there is not a great distinction between a son and a grand-son, who will often be adopted as a son, if he has leadership potential.

As the family enters Egypt they head first for the land assigned to them, and Judah rides ahead to scope out their requirements and set things up for the encampment. Joseph’s people would have been there ahead of them preparing the area also. Judah is taking the leadership role as the organizer of things. The family will settle, rest and refresh themselves after their long journey before formally being brought, washed and in clean clothes, before Pharaoh. Joseph meets his father on the way and there is a tender and emotional meeting with great love and sadness, as they embrace and kiss.

**Verses 30 – 34.** Old Jacob is a sad and yet blessed individual by this point. He is relieved and full of quiet joy at seeing his son again. He is also a man ready to die, very old and weary of this world. He has paid a terrible price for his early life, but has been blessed as he has obeyed. He remains a figure that teaches us hope and confidence in the Lord as we advance through life. This man has suffered much, but is brought to his death with joy in his Lord and seeing his family united in the purpose of God for them all. The grace of God is seen in the history of Israel, that at the worst time of satanic hatred towards Israel as a nation, the Great Tribulation period of history, there are still 12,000 believers able to be sealed for ministry from each tribe. Each of these sons of Jacob bear a believing remnant through history and none are bereft of men and women standing for God. Revelation 7:1-12.

Joseph now gives his briefing to the family on what they are to say and not say about their life in Canaan and their life style here in Egypt. It would be easy to tell the whole truth about their life, for they are used to talking of their “flocks and herds”, but the Egyptians hate shepherds, and culturally they will be outcasts and it will reflect badly on Joseph if they speak of sheep. The Egyptians of this time hate sheep and goats and all who work with them! The very smell offends them. Egyptian pictures from this period of shepherds show mangy men and mangy animals; they clearly hate them. Joseph wants the family to speak only of cattle and their work as “ranchers” of cattle. They are not to lie to pharaoh, but they are to give only half the truth; the sheep and goats sold in Canaan are to be forgotten.

**PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Joseph goes to long lengths to not offend the sensitivities of the Egyptians Rulers. His family sell their flocks and bring only their herds into Egypt, and then they are to speak no more of sheep and goats. They are to cast aside their normal dress and wear Egyptian clothes only as they meet pharaoh. They are to “fit in” within their new place of service. We are to learn from this ourselves, and in ministry in any culture, we are to fit in, within that culture. Our own desires and habits are to be set aside and we are to focus upon the cultural practises, desires, and concerns of the people to whom we minister. Our sole concern is to communicate truth to these people. Our cherished practises are to be cast away as worthless things that we might win the lost to Christ. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, Philipians 3:4-11.
2. All moves and change in life need to be offered up to the Lord in prayer. Rebuilding the prayer altar is a good thing in our lives, but a better thing is not to stop using prayer in the first place. Prayer is meant to be a daily activity, saturating our waking hours. Let us speak and listen to our Lord often. Just as God met Israel in his weakness so he meets us each day in our needs. We rest in the grace, mercy, love, and plan of God. We are his ambassadors, and so it is his responsibility to attend to our every need, and his promise is that he will do that. Our job is to cast our cares upon Him.
3. The grand-sons of Israel are named by their father’s for all sorts of things, but few of them reflect upon anything spiritual. The names of this chapter are a reminder that the sons of Israel have been away from the Lord just as their father has been. Let us keep close to the Lord, so that our children bear his godly name upon them, and that they serve the Lord in truth and confidence all the days of their lives. Let us set godly example.
4. The twelve tribes still exist and will yet serve the Lord from the land promised to Abraham. The greatest miracle of preservation in world history is the survival of the Jewish people. So many times they have been persecuted and satanic hatred has burned against them to the point where a remnant only has survived at times. God’s preservation of his people is a miracle, and it points to the power of God to keep those who are within his plan, even when they are in rebellion. Anyone doubting God’s ability to bring them through needs to look at the survival of Israel.

**CHAPTER 47**

**INTRODUCTION**

Having told his family very carefully to avoid the use of the word “shepherd”, that is the impression that Joseph apparently gives to pharaoh when he introduces some of the family members to him. A closer study reveals that Joseph has used an inclusive term for “herdsman” that could refer to flocks or herds, and he has mentioned flocks in his introduction, although it would appear they have not brought down the hated sheep.

When the men however meet Pharaoh, they use the word “shepherds”. Pharaoh is not put off, but he uses the term for cattle only, and then he meets Jacob and receives his blessing. Pharaoh gives Joseph the task of placing his brothers in charge of Pharaoh’s cattle herds as they will grow stronger through selective breeding through the famine time.

Egypt will be blessed by association with these people for the next two hundred years, and only when the new rulers of a new dynasty rise up, who “know not Joseph”, and persecute them, does this blessing stop. God’s people bring blessing to those who they work with, live with, and serve. This principle applies right into our own days.

**GENESIS 47:1-31**

**“1 Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. 2 And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. 3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. 5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: 6 The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. ,7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? 9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. 11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as**

Pharaoh had commanded. 12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families. 13 And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. 14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth. 16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year. 18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. 20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. 21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. 22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. 23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. 25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. 26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part, except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's. 27 And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. 29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: 30 But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head."

## REFLECTION

**Verses 1 – 3.** These men will not lie about their occupations, even if it causes problems to Joseph. They are not good at following simple instructions here, and call themselves shepherds, but they get away with it. Hebrews 2:11. They are foolish, but honest and Pharaoh ignores the unacceptable and focuses upon the thing he can use them for; to care for his herds. They have compromised with their dress and will "fit in" within Egypt, and they will play down their care of sheep and goats for the next hundred years as their main occupation, and they will concentrate upon cattle.

It is a double reminder to us that God wants us to fit in where we serve, and not upset the people to whom we minister truth, and he also wants us to speak truth. God also delights in using the rejected of men, the despised trades, and their ignored people, and he ignores the prejudices of men; all he seeks is our devotion to his will for our lives and our readiness to go anywhere to serve him. Amos 7:14-17, Acts 9:43.

By the time of the Exodus the Jewish people have started to farm their sheep again in large numbers. They are all despised slaves by then, and so it doesn't matter by then. Exodus 1:8-14. It will be, in the days of Moses, the despised lamb that will be the substitutionary sacrifice for their sins. Exodus 12:1-13.

The despised lamb will become the heart of the Lord's Passover Feast and they will leave Egypt with their acquired sheep, goats and many cattle. Exodus 12:32-38. Grace is Moses theme, and that is the key word behind this story, for these men do not present their best front, nor do they behave in a dignified and diplomatic way. It is God's grace alone that keeps them. Joseph has chosen the best five of the twelve to meet pharaoh, and even they can't follow instructions and say too much!

**Verses 4 – 6.** These men don't just stop with the word shepherd, but use the word flocks, and say too much about their business and what they want in Egypt. They are under the grace of God and at the pleasure of pharaoh. Their only really correct response to pharaoh's question was, "We are here as a result of Joseph's invitation and we await your grace and pleasure". They are too used to blunt conversations in Canaan to play any political games. They blurt out a request to live in Goshen, which has already been given them by Joseph. They don't have to ask to be let live in the land of Goshen, nor tell pharaoh that there is famine in the land. He knows these things already!

The interchange is so embarrassing that Pharaoh doesn't answer them, he turns to Joseph and says, "Let them live in Goshen". He has already said this before, so it is superfluous, and indicates he is irritated with them, and the audience is short. In grace, gratitude to Joseph, and perhaps desperation to find these men something to do to stop them being so annoying, the smart ones are to be given roles as herd managers. There may be sarcasm in pharaoh's words, "if there be any man of activity amongst them". What this means is any man of intelligence and ability, (fit in mind and body) and

from the meeting with these five, I suspect he doubts it, but trusts Joseph's ability to select people who may be useful to Egypt.

The brothers didn't need to ask for anything, for Joseph had been given delegated authority to provide it. Exodus 45:17-20. They needed simply to introduce themselves and thank pharaoh for his grace and favour. The whole thing is an embarrassment! They are like "hicks from the hill country". They are country cousins, and even in their best Egyptian clothing, with only five chosen, as the most likely to make a good impression, they mess things up. It is a good picture of God's over-ruling power. They do not earn or deserve the favour of the Lord, and they stumble and bumble through their formal meeting with the greatest ruler of their day, but they are blessed anyway.

God is good to us, and we are covered within his plan, even when we get things as wrong as these five did this day. Joseph will have opportunity over the next five years to secure pharaoh's greater gratitude, and so his politically dumb brothers are covered by Joseph's brilliance, and this was God's plan all along. Joseph becomes the centre of their universe, and he shines glory upon them, and they bow in appreciation for what he provides, just as God had shown twenty years before in the dream. Genesis 37:9-11.

**Verses 7 – 10.** Joseph possibly tries to impress pharaoh, after the disaster with the five brothers, by introducing his father, hoping the spiritual status of Jacob will cover the embarrassment of the five "hicks". He is right in this, for Jacob is now back to being a spiritual giant, and pharaoh recognizes the spiritual lineage that flows now through Joseph. Jacob blesses pharaoh going in and coming out of the meeting.

**Numbers 6:23 – 27.** *"23. Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,*

*24. The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:*

*25. The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

*26. The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*

*27. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them."*

Jacob is old, and pharaoh asks just how old. Notice Jacob's wonderful answer. He now sees his life as a pilgrimage towards heaven. It has taken him a while, but he has arrived at a full understanding of his journey through this world. He sees that his life is just a temporary "tenting", or "sojourning", on the path to a more permanent home in heaven. Moses will use the same word to describe the land of Canaan, as the land of his fore-father's pilgrimage. Exodus 6:4. As the Psalmist says, Psalms 119:54, God's Word is the comfort to all his people in the houses of their pilgrimage. There is one place that we are designed to feel at home, and that is in heaven. Our permanent home is heaven. John 14:1ff.

**Verses 11 – 12.** The five brothers asked for the land of Goshen instead of waiting for Joseph to confirm a gift of land with Pharaoh. Pharaoh however confirmed the grant of this land to the people of Israel and they are formally given possession there. What happened to the previous inhabitants? They are moved off the land. The Pharaoh had absolute power and was able to do anything, and Joseph himself will move the entire rural population into the cities before the famine ends as we will see below. The possession of the entire land/province of Goshen (in Moses day and later called the "Land of Ramses") by these cattle herders is going to cause resentment amongst the Egyptians over time, and over a hundred years later it will burst out in active persecution. Exodus 1:7-15.

In this generation however there will be peace and prosperity for all the family of Israel. The entire extended family will be blessed, and it will expand, and all members will be fed by Joseph's provision of grain to them. They are granted the use of the land, but not the ownership of it, but that is all they need, for their wealth is their animals and what they provide for them. The delta land they live upon is going to retain some fertility for growing vegetables, with a little water from the much reduced river and the animals will survive and be healthy, providing milk and meat.

The entire land of Upper Egypt is however not so lucky; without the annual flood, the ground away from the river is hard and dry and nothing grows, except basic vegetables grown on the river bank with water hand drawn from the river. Famine and any form of shortage should have an immediate impact upon a people; it ought to produce serious repentance and prayer. Jeremiah 9:10-14, 14:1-12, Joel 1:10-14.

At times in their history God punished Israel for their sins through famine, and any shortage we confront ought to be confronted with prayer. For believers facing shortage, or "fiery trial", Confession of sin, faith-rest in the plan of God and prayer for strength, perception and guidance are our path through. 2 Corinthians 13:5, 1 John 1:9-10, Hebrews 3:17 – 4:12, 1 Peter 4:10-13.

**Verses 13 - 15.** The famine goes on into it's later years and the people of Egypt (and Canaan) exhaust their savings to pay for the grain they need to survive. These verses also tell us that through the famine Joseph has gained political control of the land of Canaan also. Moses mentions both Egypt and Canaan in the same terms, and thereby indicates that Egyptian political control of Canaan has been achieved. Joseph has brought the land of Canaan into pharaoh's orbit by his use of the sale of grain. By closing the borders to normal trade and finally getting the peoples of Canaan to buy grain, they exhaust their government funds, and so must submit to Egyptian rulership as tribute City States. Egypt has by this means gained control of the land of Canaan by economic means, without the use of force.

Joseph has been careful about getting his family out of Canaan, and this information may indicate another reason for their stealthy departure. Joseph wants to stop any mass migrations, but also he may have feared that his family would be

held hostage for grain if they remained any longer in the land, once their relationship with him got out. Through clever use of monopoly trade, he controls the land of Canaan and its rulers, whose people do not eat without his grain. The land of Egypt would later keep the Roman heartland alive through its produce also, and this remained the strength of Egypt for over a thousand years after Joseph.

**Verses 16 – 17.** The reason to have his brothers in charge of the animals now becomes apparent. The best of the animals will need to be kept alive until the end of the drought for breeding purposes so that the land can be restocked when the rains come to Africa and the Nile floods again. This will involve careful selection of the best stock for keeping alive as breeding herds and flocks, the organizing of their care, and the use of the other stock for food, so that there is meat in the land. The eleven brothers could all have been busy, from one end of the land to the other organizing the collection, recording and selection of stock for slaughter or for breeding later. The animals will also need to be fed and kept alive through the next five or six years before the rains come again to central Africa to raise the Nile.

The people are forced to sell all their animals to pharaoh. This “nationalization of stock” was the best solution here, for private enterprise would have failed totally to be able to prepare for the years required before the famine was to be over. Only divine viewpoint can save the day here, and Joseph has that as a prophet of God. This stock pool and their selected bred offspring will repopulate the land after the famine with stronger and better animals. The technique that Jacob used to build his flocks and herds is probably the one used by his sons to save the best of Egyptian live stock. Genesis 30. The famine will be used to improve the quality of the live-stock of the entire land, and the animals will probably be leased back to the farmers, who over the years of new harvest will be able to buy the new stock back. (This view is based on what happens with the land itself - below). Everyone gains from Joseph’s plan and the execution of it.

**Verse 18 – 19.** The famine is really biting now and the people, having sold their animals have nothing left to sell except their land and themselves as slaves/servants to Pharaoh. The entire farming population in the fields is starving unless they get food from Joseph. They make their offer. This may appear shocking to us, but it was an accepted way in the ancient world for the poor to ensure they were fed by those who had the assets to support them. By selling yourself to a master, they had responsibility to feed you and you had the responsibility to work for them from after dawn till before dusk for your food and board. In most places this situation was not abused, and operated for the mutual benefit of all, and could be for a limited time frame. Those who were unable to look after their own affairs got cared for, in return for their work.

Moses will institute this system of welfare in the Mosaic Law, with a limit set for a Hebrew sold as a slave for poverty reasons. Moses set the limit at seven years service for a person in this state, although if they were dealt with as a servant with property rights, they could elect to stay with their master for their whole life. Exodus 21:1-11, Leviticus 25:35-44. This system gave security to those who did not have the ability to administer their own affairs and would otherwise have starved to death, having lost their goods by their poor management, unfortunate circumstances, or bad decisions. Such people today are on welfare with the State and are often worse off than a servant would be living in a great house with their daily routine set for them and everything they needed provided.

**Verses 20 – 22.** All the arable farming land of Egypt passes into the hands of Pharaoh, and the people become his servants, to do his bidding. At this point there is not much to do on the land, although from verses below, it appears that the people were used for building projects through this period. To assist with the administration of these projects, and make the grain distribution easier, Joseph moves the rural population into the cities as a temporary measure.

Pharaoh gets all the civil works he needs done through this period, and possibly as well as public building repairs and new construction, new canals may have been dug, in readiness for the coming Nile floods. All work that needed to be done for infrastructure could be achieved in this four or five year period, before the Nile floods again. It is a dangerous thing to have people sitting idle and just getting food, and the ancient world concept was that such a thing was evil, so work would have been done for food. Such a thing is so normal to them that Moses doesn’t have to mention it specifically. The priests alone were exempt from this purchase of land, for their lands were already held under pharaoh’s rulership, for he was the god’s representative upon the earth as the Egyptians saw it.

**Verses 23 – 26.** Joseph sets an open form of servitude for the land. It is welcomed by the people, for they are so relieved to be alive, and also they could have been reduced to total serf status, whereby they owned nothing and were forced to give a percentage of their food production to Pharaoh. Joseph’s solution will allow the peasants to re-purchase the animals and have a good life style, while pharaoh gets to keep the ownership of land and receives 20% of every harvest, so that the use of grain for trade and any future needs of the State is safeguarded.

The great granaries Joseph has built will be able to be refilled again by this means and used for trade-diplomacy with other nations, or to raise further funds for war or public building. Joseph has laid the foundation for prosperity in Egypt for the next 2000 years. The 20% tax on grain remained the main taxation standard in Egypt at least until the days of Moses 430 years later. It is of note that politicians still try to argue for such a flat tax rate even in modern days, although the nations today do not have the wisdom guiding them that Joseph brought to bear upon Egypt. Remember the principle, that we will see many times in the scriptures; that all systems of man’s government can work with the right, God-directed and controlled people leading or administering them.

**Verses 27 – 31.** The descendents of old Israel live in Egypt and are blessed there. Their families grow with sons and daughters and they eat well, and have status under Joseph. I suspect they may have had significant roles

assisting throughout the land with the animals, as noted above. The whole family is blessed by their association with Joseph and his position as second in charge to pharaoh. Joseph is secure, because of his service, for he has brought wealth and a doubling at least of Egypt's power through his administration and wisdom. As the old patriarch draws near for his time to die, he calls his son Joseph to him and gives him the instructions that would be normally given to the oldest, but here to the most powerful. Joseph is the one with the power and authority to ensure that Israel's dying wishes are followed through.

As the father of the second in charge of Egypt, old Israel will be given the right to be buried in a massive tomb with royalty. He will have the opportunity to be mummified and treated by the priests of the Egyptian temples as a god himself, and be treated with great dignity by them. All this is very good for those who do not think with divine viewpoint, but for Israel, he desires a godly burial with his ancestors, so that he stands in his resurrection body, in the company of his godly relatives. He does not seek the greatest honour that cultured and respectful pagans can pay him, he seeks the blessing of God's people and seeks to have his body laid with Abraham and Isaac. He urgently seeks Joseph's swearing that this will be allowed, and that Joseph will ensure it happens.

When a great person neared their end, a tomb was readied for them and arrangements were made for their funeral. Israel may have been entitled to a state funeral given his relationship with Joseph, and so it is vital that his wishes are clearly understood by Joseph, and that he solemnly swears to follow through on his father's wishes. He does so and Israel relaxes into his death bed. It may have been several days before he died, but he now knows that his body will be dealt with after his death as he wishes.

This is important for us all, for our last testimony is the manner of our funeral and our burying. All bodies decay away, and so the argument about cremation as the destruction of the body and in some way stopping the resurrection is a nonsense. Many people are unable to be buried, for their bodies are blown apart in war, burned to nothing in an accident, or buried in places where they decay to nothing in acidic soils. The state of the physical body is of no consequence for the resurrection, for the creator of the entire universe is able to give the resurrection body to the believer at the point their body was laid, buried, ashes scattered, or destroyed.

The significance of burial is in the picture it gives of the expectation of the person who has died. By burial you testify that you expect a resurrection body to be received at the place where the body is laid aside. By selecting the company to be buried in, or place of your burial, you also testify to your expectations and your desire to stand in resurrection body with those you respected and loved. If to be with them you need to be cremated, then that is not going to stop the reception of the resurrection body. Where we are buried is of significance, as Israel makes clear, and as later Joseph will declare regarding his own body.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. It is grace all the way in God's Plan. The sons of Israel are not good at following instructions from Joseph and say things that could make pharaoh think badly of them, but God in grace over rules and they are blessed anyway. God always treats us in grace and love, rather than what we deserve. Let us give thanks that our stupidity at times has not stopped the Lord's blessing of us and his use of us through the years.
2. Like old Jacob, we are meant to be a blessing to all we meet. We are meant to bless all along the way with truth to them, prayer for them, and loving concern around them. Let us focus on being a blessing, rather than acquiring wealth or power. Old Israel sees that it is in blessing and being blessed that life finds its meaning, not in the abundance of possessions. Let us be content with what we have before the Lord. Matthew 6:25-34.
3. Even at 130 years of age, Jacob's life is "short", and he feels the vanity of the success that men hold dear to them. No longer does he see wealth as his goal, and status through his family as his aim. He sees his life as a journey towards his death and his real eternal reward with God. *Psalms 39:4-5, 89:47, 90:3-12*. Meditate upon these words about mortality from the Psalms, and be comforted and corrected as to what you value in this life.

Israel will live for another seventeen years, and will die at 147 years of age. He enjoys his last years and rejoices in the prosperity that God has given to balance out the dark days of Joseph's loss. He had seventeen years with him before his being sold into Egypt and he has seventeen years with him after his reuniting. God has blessed Israel with joy from his sadness.

4. This chapter is a reminder not to make any political or economic system or theory the "biblical one", for many economic systems are described in the Bible and all work, when administered by godly men or women. Joseph administers a dictatorship model, with State ownership of all property, but it works well.

Many today think that "private enterprise capitalism" is God's divinely appointed way to govern. This chapter reminds us that it is not. We are to pray for our governments, whatever their nature, and whether they have satanically inspired leaders or godly ones. Romans 13:1-4, 1 Timothy 2:1-2. If we are called by God to serve in the political realm, then let us serve like Joseph, with godly wisdom guiding our steps, and if not, then let us pray for our leadership that they do not interfere with the work of God's people within their State.

**Psalms 39:4-5**, "4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am."

5. *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah."*

**Psalm 89:47.** *"47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?"*

**Psalm 90:3-12.** *"3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*

*4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

*5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*

*6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

*7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.*

*8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*

*9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.*

*10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

*11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

*12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."*

### **REFLECTIONS UPON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: "BLESSED IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST"**

1. Believers are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
2. The same Greek word is used in (John 3:12) where the word 'things' is mentioned.
3. The heavenlies is the area of the believer's spiritual experience as identified with Christ in various ways:-
  - a) Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
  - b) Life (Colossians 3:4; 1 John 5:12)
  - c) Relationships (John 20:17; Hebrews 2:11)
  - d) Inheritance (Romans 6:16,17)
  - e) Service (John 17:18; Matthew 28:20)
  - f) Suffering (Philippians 1:29; 3:10; Colossians 1:24)
  - g) Future glory (Romans 8:18-21; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10).
4. The believer is a "heavenly"(spiritual) man and a stranger or pilgrim on the earth. (Hebrews 3:1,1 Peter 2:11).
5. The believer is an ambassador from Heaven. (2 Corinthians 5:20).

### **Notes**

**CHAPTER 48****INTRODUCTION TO THE DEATHS OF JACOB AND JOSEPH**

Towards the end of Genesis we find three chapters taken up with the death of Jacob and Joseph. This is more space than for any deaths in scripture except the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, so we can be sure, even before we study these chapters, that they are significant and carry vital truths for all time. In Chapter 49 Jacob says where he wants to be buried and gives one of the great prophecies of the scriptures; that of the future of the twelve tribes who will descend from his twelve sons. We have the prophetic future in this one chapter.

We see here the importance of the site of the burial of believers, and why, as far as is possible, that we select the place for burial as a testimony of our faith. Jacob was buried with his father and grandfather, as he wanted to be in their company at the resurrection. When you are resurrected from the dead you are resurrected at the site of your burial, or place of death, if the body was destroyed, and Jacob wanted to be with his family.

Pharaoh and/or Joseph certainly will lead an army to escort the body to its place of burial. Joseph closed his father's eyes and embalmed him, and over a forty day period Egypt mourned the death of Jacob, such was his status as father of the second ruler of the land. The escort through Canaan would have been something to see, and the kings of the land of Canaan would have turned out to pay their respects on the way, as all Canaan is now paying tribute to Egypt as a result of Joseph's service to them through the great famine.

Everybody in Egypt knew that he had died, giving a good testimony of what he stood for and believed. He could have been buried in the Valley of the Kings, but he wants to go back to Canaan, to be buried in the cave with his father and grandfather, because he believes he is to be raised from the dead. Every funeral should be such a testimony to the fact of the resurrection of the believer, and that sure belief means that we want to select our company in the resurrection.

With the death of Jacob his other sons get concerned that Joseph is going to give them a hard time and sends a message to Joseph that Jacob had said before he died that Joseph should forgive them for their trespasses. Joseph wept when he saw this, for it showed that they had little understanding of his forgiveness, and his grace mental attitude. Even though the brothers again said that they would be his slaves, he said for them not to worry, and that he would protect and sustain both them and their little ones.

**THE DEATH OF JOSEPH**

Joseph lived until he was 110 years old and saw his sons to the third generation. When he was dying Joseph prophesied to the Jewish people that God would protect them and take them out from the land. He gave them specific instructions regarding his burial, "You are to take my bones with you". They embalmed him and put him in a coffin in Egypt, but he was not buried. His coffin became a testimony to his belief that one day they would leave the nation that had saved them. Joseph's coffin became their "gospel" tract to go to and look at and remember that they were leaving this nation one day, and then they would take him with them. Joseph also would have been entitled to be buried with his Pharaoh, but selects not to be. These men turned away from the blessing of man to the lasting blessing of God.

Genesis begins with a perfect man in the Garden of Eden and ends with a body in a coffin in Egypt, but this coffin is a thing of hope. It became the Bible to the Jews and several generations of Jews were brought before the coffin and were told, "that as God had brought us into Egypt so he will bring us out".

The coffin represented, "God will visit us, we will not be here for ever". God has not forgotten us even though we may be in an area of great difficulty. We will be where he wants us to be if we remain in fellowship. When Moses went out of Egypt, leading the army was the Coffin, in which were the bones of Joseph. It reminded them that when God says something, he means it. In faith Joseph knew that he would go to Canaan for burial and resurrection, but allowed his body to stay in Egypt as a testimony. His belief was, that what God says, he will do. Joseph was prepared to leave his body unburied for four hundred years, for his coffin to be a testimony and encouragement to his people.

Joseph will leave the site of his burial to his descendents. He does not request to be buried with his father, grand-father, and great grand-father in the family tomb in what is now modern Hebron. He leaves it to his descendents, so that they are free to bury him close by to where they will live in the land when they return. This was a good call on Joseph's part, for otherwise his body would have been buried in a place where his descendents could not have visited. As it was Joshua decided that the place for Joseph's burial was at Shechem where Jacob had purchased land as testimony that his descendents would one day live there permanently and had built an altar there. Genesis 33:18-20. This grave is outside modern Nablus, cared for by Jew and Moslem, as is the other great burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at Hebron. Joshua 24:32-33.

**GENESIS 48:1-22**

“1 And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2 And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. 3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem. 8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9 And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. 10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed. 12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. 17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. 19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. 20 And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh. 21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 2.** Things go on very normally for the remaining years of the great famine, and in the years following the actions of Joseph bear incredible fruit in the land of Egypt, which prospers and grows in power and influence as the land returns to full productivity after the seven years of fallow. The farmers return to their land, now owned by pharaoh, but they pay only a twenty percentage tax on their crops for their rental tenure, and are able to return and repair their houses, and they have all survived a famine that has killed hundreds of thousands else-where in Central and Northern Africa.

One day Joseph hears that his father is ill unto death. When an old man has been around a long time there is the quiet but unrealistic expectation that they will be around for ever. The survival of such a man as Jacob was a phenomenon in the entire land. None had lived this long before in their land. Jacob was famous for his longevity, but even more as a prophet of the God of Joseph who had saved them. Jacob was right when he had earlier spoken to Joseph about his burial, for once it occurs things will happen fast, and he needs to know that his will is going to be followed by his son. Joseph understands the urgency of the request to visit his father this time and rushes to travel to Goshen and see him. He takes his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with him, and when a servant tells old Israel that his son is there, the old man strengthens himself and sits on the side of his bed to welcome his son and grandsons.

**Verses 3 – 4.** Israel reminds Joseph that all that has happened and all that will happen is in accordance with the plan of almighty God. As Israel grounds himself in the promises of God, just so he wants Joseph to ground himself in the promises of almighty God. That central promise made to Israel, built upon those made to Abraham and Isaac; that they would become a great people and inherit the land of Canaan for their descendents. Genesis 17:1ff, 8-13, 28:12-28, 35:9-19.

The most important point that old Israel makes, is that the entire plan of God is centred in the family that he has led into Egypt and that Joseph has a key part to play into the future, as have his sons. All of God's plan centres in Israel, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh will be the most numerous. Deuteronomy 32:8-9, Amos 9:14-15.

**Verses 5 – 6.** Jacob now does something that must have surprised Joseph and the boys; he formally adopts these boys as his own sons, on a par to the two oldest. It is a way of saying to them all that these two boys will be the leaders of the people in numbers and will surpass the oldest two by far. Jacob then refers to other children of Joseph as being “his” directly, but that these two boys are counted with the twelve tribes and become tribes in their own right in place of Joseph.

No tribe is named for Joseph, but two are added in his place as having inheritance in the land of Canaan. They will be two of the twelve, with Joseph not counted, and Levi also set aside as the priestly family with no set aside land as their inheritance, only cities to live in amongst the other tribes. This blessing of Israel will be acted upon by Joshua. Joshua 13:7-14, 14:1-5, Joshua 16-17. They will fail and fall into alcoholism and idolatry, but there is hope in salvation through their return to the Lord, and this is the story of their history. Isaiah 11:13, 28:1-16, 43:1-7, Hosea 4:17, 13:1-12.

As old Israel blesses these two handsome, educated, and noble young men, there is hope and confidence for the future, and that same hope and confidence will be there whenever their descendents were obedient to the Lord their God who called them to follow him. Just so with us, there is blessing and confidence whenever we serve the Lord our God in obedience and let the Holy Spirit make up for our flagging human energy. Praise the Lord alone, for in Him alone is our strength. Exodus 15:2, Nehemiah 8:10, Psalms 28:7-8, 46:1, 62:7, Proverbs 10:29.

**Verses 7 – 8.** As Israel does this he remembers Rachel, Joseph's mother, and he honours her in the naming of her two grand-sons as a double tribe. The great love Israel had for Rachel is recorded here, even though she failed and was spiritually weak through her idolatry, she was loved and adored, as a wife should be by her husband. Rachel may have died the Sin Unto Death for her unfaced sins, but she is still blessed in her posterity, and will be raised to eternal life in joy, from Bethlehem where her body lies.

Israel remembers her and honours her, and Moses records her place of burial. She is buried in what will become Bethlehem. She is not in the land that will be received by her grand-sons, but in the town that will be blessed by another birth, that will end the sting of death forever. She dies in Bethlehem, but the one to be born there later will live, and his mother will live, and all mankind will live because of him. Jesus will be born where Rachel died. Out of the curse of death and idolatry will come the blessing of genuine salvation and eternal life. Ruth 4:11-14, 22, 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

It is clear from Israel's comment when he sees the two boys draw near to him that he has not seen the boys for some time, also his eye sight is very bad now, and it may also be that he has some memory failure associated with the heart failure that characterizes old age. As we get older we may forget some things or people, but once the memory is jogged by a word or phrase, all comes back quickly and completely. Moses will comment further on this below. It is probably a mix of these things, for as travel would be only for special occasions in this day, and several trips a year to Goshen would have been all that Joseph and his boys would probably manage.

There is a modern myth that we need to be living in each other's pockets to be a true family. This is not borne out by the record of scripture here and elsewhere. As a ruler of a great nation Joseph has his time taken up daily with his duties, and would have seen his father when he could. Grandparents did not necessarily have a great deal to do with their older grand-children, much as today. Grandchildren love their grandparent's company up until around puberty, and then for a number of years will be busy with their own lives as teenagers, and only later will return to hear the stories of their grandparents and share their fellowship again. This has happened here and it is normal, and there is no tragedy. Israel does not need to be surrounded by family to feel good, for he is back in living fellowship with his Lord now. Our challenge, if we are grandparents, is to be spiritually interesting people to fellowship with!

**Verses 9 – 10.** Moses emphasizes that it is an eye sight problem that is the primary one in Jacob's case. His spiritual and mental faculties are good once he is told the boys names. He sits on the edge of the bed and brings the two boys to him and kisses the boys and hugs them with love and joy. In these boys he probably sees himself as a young man, and also in them he sees the answers to prayer of the Lord and the future hope of the people. His sole desire is to bless these boys and pass on the spiritual mantle to them as future leaders in their own right. As God has given them to Joseph, so he gives them back to God in blessing them, placing them firmly in the hand of the one who gave them. This is the principle for us all; as we receive from the Lord so we bless the Lord and pass all we have back to Him. Moses will do the same as Jacob does here at the end of his own life. Deuteronomy 33:1ff, Ephesians 3: 14-21, Hebrews 11:21-22.

**Verses 11 – 12.** This is a tender moment indeed. The old man holds the boys and weeps as he tells Joseph how he had despaired of ever seeing him again, and yet God in grace has given him the sight of Joseph's sons also. Old Israel praises God for the joy of seeing the promise of God fulfilled with his posterity numbering more than seventy in this next generation, and he can see that his family will grow into a nation, just as God has promised. He glimpses the fulfilment of the promise and rejoices in what he cannot see, but is assured of in the plan of God. Romans 8:24-28, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Ephesians 3:18-20, Hebrews 11:1-3, 21, 1 Peter 1:6-11. Read each of these passages and you will have a great meditation upon faith and praise from this incident for any Bible study.

**Verses 13 – 15.** Joseph bows to the earth before his father. This prostration is exactly as you see in a mosque in Moslem worship today. Joseph thereby honours his father and his boys do likewise. They are rulers of Egypt and second only to pharaoh and his sons, but they honour the spiritual position of Jacob as the head of the promised nation that will flow from them all. They recognize the promise of God and the Plan of God and in their worship before Israel. They do not worship him, but all he stands for in the plan.

Old Israel has been a spiritual fool much of his life, for he has not been the spiritual giant he could have been in early years, but he has grown in grace and knowledge of the Plan of God, and now he is the man he needs to be to leave this earth in glory. Israel is a wonderful picture of God's grace, and a reminder, as we have seen before, that it is never too late in the plan of God to become who you need to be.

Joseph brings the boys out from between Israel's knees where they had been embraced, and now, having made his prostration before his father, presents the boys formally for their blessing. He has his youngest son Ephraim on his right hand (Israel's left) and his oldest son Manasseh on his left (Israel's right), ready for his father to simply place his hands directly forward upon their heads to give their blessing according to the custom of oldest first. What Israel does surprises Joseph, and the boys also. He crosses his hands over, so that his right hand goes to Joseph's right, to Ephraim as if he is the oldest. Moses notes that he does it deliberately, and the three men realise that Israel is doing this for some purpose.

He then begins by blessing Joseph, while his hands are upon Joseph's sons. He does this to indicate that the blessing of Joseph is to be upon his sons, not upon himself. He recognizes that the blessing is all of grace, and not of any power Jacob has had. Gone is the man who wrestled with the angel in the night, Genesis 32:24-32. He no longer fights God for blessing, but sees that he has, from God's abundant grace, received blessing, well above and beyond his desserts, and it is all from God's abundance, not as if wrestled out of God's reluctance. Israel has now walked as his fathers walked before the Lord and knows the God of Grace.

**Verses 16 – 18.** Israel refers to the "angel" of the Lord who protected him. This is probably a general reference to all the revelation he had received by way of the Angel of the Lord. Genesis 16:7-11, 28:15, 31:11-24. The one who kept Israel is the one who still keeps his descendents, the Angel of JHWH; the Lord Jesus Christ. The day is coming when all Israel living will recognize the one who has kept them and paid for their salvation, just as old Jacob here recognizes him before his First Advent. Zechariah 12:10-14, 13:6.

Joseph hears the blessing and then realises that the hands are, in his mind, on the wrong heads. With this general blessing it isn't that important, but if Israel gives a "birth-right" blessing, then it will be important that his hand is on the right head. He tries to move his father's hands. It is always a foolish thing to try to move a father's hands, for he is the one giving the blessing; we are simply the receivers. He knows best, and Joseph will discover this.

**Verses 19 – 22.** Old Israel tells Joseph that he isn't as blind as Joseph may fear, and that his action in crossing over his arms is a genuine case of prophetic gifting, not any mistake on his part. The younger son's descendents will outnumber the older one and a nation will be named after him. Ephraim will indeed become a great nation and will form the heart of the Northern Kingdom from the 900s through until it's destruction in 720 BC and the deportation of the population.

In exile the northern people are either absorbed into the Assyrian masses, or for some of them, who remained true to their identity, they later returned to the reborn nation Israel as a province of the Persian Empire under Zerubbabel and Joshua or Ezra and Nehemiah. All the northern tribe's survivors who remained true to their faith were a part of the nation that the Lord came to and died for. James 1:1. There are no "lost ten tribes"! God does not lose his people, nor does he replace them with others. We are recipients of grace in the church today, with Israel set aside for a time, but they will be taken up again, and then all the ten tribes will provide evangelists to reach the lost. Refer to the commentaries on Romans 11, Revelation 7.

The younger will outgrow and rule over the older. In God's plan it is not our natural birth that matters, but our being born again and growing, through obedience to the Word of God, into the plan of God, in the power of God. Ephraim will fall from their great height through their disobedience, but the hope of the scriptures is that they will rise again and glorify God. No tribe will be missing when the Jewish people turn to and find their Messiah. Zechariah 12:10ff.

Old Israel is dying and he knows it. He is relaxed about that, for he rests in the grace and love of God. He blesses the sons of Joseph. His thoughts as he dies are of others rather than of himself. Israel reminds Joseph that the Lord will continue to be with him, for he walks in the plan of God for his life and the lives of the others. He will receive the double portion of the blessing of the land and inherit far more than the other tribes will inherit of the land of Israel. When you look at the allocation of the land under Joshua, you will see this clearly.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Dying grace is the promise of the Lord to all who love him. Jacob dies in grace and blessing; his eyes fixed upon the plan of God for his descendents. He has a glimpse of the greatness that is to come and rests in the power of God to fulfil all that he has promised to his fore-fathers and himself.

Let us also rest upon the promises of God. It is our vital, living, spirit filled fellowship with the Lord our God that prepares us for our eternal fellowship with the Lord. As we walk with the Lord so we die with the Lord; absent from our body and face to face with our Lord. When we die, we see our Lord immediately, just as Stephen did. We have God's Word upon it. Acts 7:55ff.

2. It is never too late to serve the Lord and worship his holy name in joy. At whatever age we find ourselves, it is the right time to praise and glorify the Lord. If a person lives there is hope for them to win renown in their walk of faith. Let us be preachers of hope, for in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, there is always hope and power to walk for him.
3. The Plan of God will work out eternally. We are to serve the Lord through obedience to the plan as it applies into our own life. We are to walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit, so that we serve the Lord in truth and with

focused energy to achieve in his power and direction the things set aside for us to do. In God's plan there is rest, power, and success, on the path of life. Let us walk forward today into whatever this day brings in confidence that the Lord will bring us through. Let us sing the doxology as we go. Jude 24-25.

## **CHAPTER 49**

### **GENESIS 49:1-15**

**1** And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. **2** Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. **3** Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: **4** Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch. **5** Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. **6** O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self will they digged down a wall. **7** Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. **8** Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. **9** Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? **10** The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. **11** Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: **12** His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk. **13** Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon. **14** Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: **15** And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute."

### **REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 2.** Having spoken blessing upon Joseph and his sons, and having already given the "double portion blessing" to the sons of Joseph, old Jacob now requests that the other sons be brought in. It would probably be that all the sons and grand-sons would have been there at this time. It was the passing of an era and so the importance of the moment would have meant every member of the family would have been gathered together. The whole tribe of Israel gathers, and he then makes it clear he is operating under prophetic gifting in what he is to say to them all.

His words will be directed towards the "last days" of their descendents, not to the immediate future. He uses the two names for himself to underline both the carnal inheritance (Jacob like) they have with his Old Sin Nature passed on to them all, with all the weaknesses he had, but also the spiritual (Israel like) inheritance they share through the grace of God. They are "sons of Jacob", but they also have Israel as their father. Just like ourselves, who are sons and daughters of Adam, but our father is God through our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reference to the "end times" by Israel is interesting, for it is the first reference to a time period that is identified by later writers of scripture as beginning with the days of the Church Age. 1 John 2:18. John's words make it clear that the period Israel referred to had begun by John's day, and it has continued now for 1900 years! We have been living in the "last days" all through this period. As we will see the prophetic words refer especially to the Tribulation Period.

Why is it referred to this way? It is the last phase of history before the Lord's return to establish his Kingdom upon the earth. The prophecies of Israel here in Genesis refer to the ultimate destiny of the nation that bears his name, as they go through Great Tribulation, and then come into their final inheritance under the Lord's personal reign upon the earth, as we will see when we get to the prophecy regarding Judah.

Balaam also prophecies into this same time period. Numbers 24:14ff. Moses also does the same. Deuteronomy 4:29-31, 31:29, 33:6-29. Isaiah then speaks of the "last days" also. Isaiah 2:2ff. The message of the prophets is that Israel will come into it's physical inheritance fully and finally as they enter their spiritual inheritance through repentance and living the life of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As they worship their God in truth, so they enter their inheritance in truth. Jeremiah 23:16-24, Daniel 2:27-30, 10:12-21, Micah 4:1ff, Zechariah 12:10-14, 14:1-9, 20-21. Old Jacob gets a glimpse of all these things and shares this in his blessings and observations over his sons.

**Verses 3 – 4.** Reuben was the oldest and by birth right had the leadership and the double portion, but both were lost because of his unstable and sexually immoral character. He demonstrated his lust-ruled character when he had sex with Bilhah, who was Jacob's fourth wife. Genesis 35:21-22. Now the reason for this sexual transgression may have been related to the death of Rachel, Bilhah's mistress. Bilhah may only have been ten to fifteen years older than Reuben,

who was born first to Leah. It may be that she was so distressed by Rachel's death that in the emotional vulnerability that grief can bring she sought comfort with the young and handsome Reuben, and he took advantage of the opportunity.

The death of Rachel was certainly an emotionally fraught time for Jacob and in his grief based distraction Reuben stepped in and had sex with Bilhah. It is a reminder to us all, that whatever the emotional vulnerability we are experiencing at any time in our life, sexual immorality is sexual immorality, and before God it is wrong and an evil! It is a further reminder that there are lasting consequences for some actions.

Sexual immorality hinders or eliminates altogether the leadership potential of those who engage in it. The pastor-teacher of the local church is to be a "one woman man". He may have lost his first wife and be married to a second, but he must have eyes for his own wife and not be tempted by other men's wives. 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:5-9.

Sexual immorality joins the child of God to an evil that pollutes the body both physically and spiritually. Our bodies are the Temples of the Holy Spirit and are not to be joined to idols, idol worshippers, or any person who is not our right partner for this life. It is a sin that Paul urges the Corinthians to "flee from". This means, to run as if their lives depended upon it, because spiritually they do. 1 Corinthians 6:13-20, 10:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

Moses saw the terrible results of immorality when 20 different groups (eleph = groups) of people are judged by God for this evil in one day during the Exodus. Exodus 32:1-6, Numbers 25:1-9. Solomon spent several chapters of Proverbs warning his sons against sexual temptations that he saw would destroy them, as they had destroyed much of his spiritual life. Solomon's kingdom was lost to rebellion and disaster after his death, because of his failure to follow through on his own advice. 1 Kings 11:1-10, Proverbs 2:12-19, 5:3-23, 6:23-35, 7:5-27.

Notice the words old Israel uses for Reuben. As he was born he was his hope and his joy; his first child, and a strong son, who grew powerful and looked good. He was his "might"; his strength, his substance, his wealth. As a boy this child looked as if he would truly be the first born and the one to lead, but as he grew older other things emerged in his character. He was an excellent specimen of dignity and majesty, and also of power, but he believed his own publicity too much and became self centred in his behaviours. He was big and strong and looked the part of a king, just as King Saul would later. He was a Hollywood style King, and had the fall of one. 1 Samuel 9:1-2.

Having spoken of his great strengths the old prophet then bluntly tells him of his fatal flaw. Like the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies this man has a tragic fatal flaw. In a lesser man it would make him a nuisance and a problem to his neighbours, for he would chase their wives. His weakness was sexual. He had an uncontrolled sexual appetite.

Now remember back to the observations we made about Jacob himself, for this boy has his father's weaknesses, but they are not controlled. We inherit our Old Sin Nature from our father, and this boy gets this weakness. All of us have inherited our weaknesses towards sin from our parents, and all of them are different, and we can say aloud, "unfair", but we are to "get over it" and take action to control what he have inherited! We have no choice about what we inherit, but we are to take charge and control it – for over our life expression of our weaknesses we have a daily choice. Our inheritance is the result of Adam's sin, and that is why we need a Saviour, and need to walk every moment in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Adam is judged by God, and all men and women are also for what we do with our weaknesses.

Old Israel tells him bluntly that he is as weak and unstable as water. As he feels passion he just lets it out and expresses it. He lacks any sense of the need to control himself, and he has not fully dealt with this even at this late stage when he is an older man, at least in his sixties, possibly in his seventies by this time. He never really got control of his passions and so is unfit to lead the others. His sin with Bilhah may be forgiven, but it is a sin that reflects his weakness, and that weakness cannot be forgiven, or ignored, for it is destructive. Any person with uncontrolled Old Sin Nature weaknesses is unfit to lead in any area of life. His sin was also a direct insult to his father, for he had sex with his father's wife on his father's bed!

We must meditate upon this principle here ourselves, for while all confessed sin is forgiven, and people can be restored to fellowship in a church, there are consequences for their future role in the church. When it comes to positions of leadership, after immorality has been dealt with by confession and life change, that person is still unfit to be a leader of the local church. Some would argue permanently, others at least until they are clearly and evidentially proven to be a "one woman man". Matthew 7:13-23, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

The early church waited for at least seven years before allowing people who had committed adultery to even be a part of worship services again, let alone hold any position of respect within the church. Sin had consequences in the area of trust, and this was identified as the key element for all leadership; for if you cannot morally/sexually/financially trust a person, then they cannot lead! The other factor for the Early Church was that those who had ruined their witness had lost the respect of the lost, and so could not be seen to be leaders, for the church was to be known for its purity.

Reuben has the fruit of evil in his life and he loses his double portion to Joseph's sons, and his leadership role to Judah. In the latter days of the nation the descendents of Reuben must make sure that they deal with this weakness, inherited from their father, or those who fight then will be disabled just as their forefather was! This tribe will become very small as the years move forward due to their failure to exercise the control over evil that they are challenged to here.

**Verses 5 – 6.** The next two brothers have another weakness but it was equally devastating. They had anger and rage to an extreme. They could not at times control their anger and they murdered men in their hatred of them. Simeon and Levi will have strong roles in the family and they will lead the battle to avenge Dinah, but they have anger that goes way beyond the bounds of justice at times.

Jacob reminds them of their murderous actions against the men of Shechem (Genesis 34:25ff) and possibly other events not recorded by Moses in Genesis. We must remember that Moses has a great deal of written material and he edits and condenses it into what we have before us. They were not just violent, but they were cruel as well. They didn't just kill those who crossed them; they made the condemned person suffer! This is not pleasant reading. Israel would have no fellowship with them because of their cruel anger. He did not find them pleasant company, and he hated their mind set.

Old Israel wouldn't even be seen in company with these two boys, and he didn't want his honour tarnished by their actions, nor did he want to be known by their actions. They had acted with wanton cruelty, killing the men of Shechem, but also they "dugged down a wall"; literally in the Hebrew, this means they hocked the oxen of the Shechemites, cutting their Achilles tendons.

They caused awful pain to animals, rendering them useless to men, and in pain until someone killed them. God cares for animals and those who injure them thoughtlessly are under judgment. Matthew 10:29-31. This was a terrible thing to do to animals. It shows the blind hatred of these men; their lust for vengeance on the men and even on their animals. It was a great evil in God's sight and they are judged for it and their descendents will have no share in the land of promise, except as guests of the larger tribes.

Simeon will become the smallest of the tribes by the time of the Exodus. Numbers 26:14, while in Moses blessing in Deuteronomy 33 they are not even mentioned. By the time of settlement of the land under Joshua they only receive a few cities amongst the tribe of Judah. Joshua 19:1-9. By the days of 1 Chronicles 4:27 they have some increase in numbers, but their strongest groups leave the Promised Land to search for cattle grazing land. 1 Chronicles 4:38-43. Anger is a curse, and if uncontrolled produces a curse upon the angry person. They survive, but within the tribe of Judah.

Levi will be judged by deliberately being left out of any inheritance in the Promised Land. They will repent, and their leadership in the Exodus will redeem them into a position of blessing, and they will become the priests of the nation however. Moses was from this tribe. Exodus 2:1ff. Moses writes this curse upon his own ancestor carefully down. It is a reminder to us that Moses was not himself going to have any inheritance in the land himself, for he was their leader, but also of the priestly line, which his brother Aaron would head up for worship purposes. God turns the cursing to blessing for this tribe. Romans 8:26-28.

Moses as a prophet and priest stands before the people to serve the Lord in caring for them. By his service he wipes away the stain of his ancestor Levi, but as a tribe they will not have any inheritance in the land, either in the days of Israel's nationhood, nor in the millennial kingdom. They will serve the Lord however in the place of honour and hold holy things. Sin does have a flow on effect, but there is hope if we serve the Lord and seek to do whatever is in our path to honour God. As two brothers who were inseparable, the two men's descendents will be scattered people, living amongst their brethren. In the "latter days" of the Great Tribulation they must ensure that they are not guided by their anger, but by their battle orders, for only then will they be controlled enough to be of use in the final battles.

**Verses 8-10.** Judah is given the leadership blessing and it centres in the one who will come from Judah's line, the Messiah, referred to here as "Shiloh". Judah will be praised by their brethren and the others will look to them for leadership eventually. As Joseph's dream indicated in his generation that his brethren would bow to him, so this prophecy tells Judah that all the descendents of Jacob will bow to his descendent, the Lord of all. They will begin this process in bowing to David. 1 Samuel 16:1-7, 13, 2 Samuel 2:1ff.

The descendents of Judah will be victorious in the armies and they will rule the land for over five hundred years, from the days of David through until his last corrupt descendents Jeconiah, and Zedekiah fell into the Babylonians hands and were taken captive to Babylon. They would be the forefathers of the two lines of people that would lead to Mary and Joseph, who would have the honour of being parents to the Messiah.

Judah's symbol was and is the lion, and this is the image that the old man has of Judah. He was a man who had sexually sinned also, but he faced his evil and confronted his weakness and resolved the problem. He became more and more lion like through his life and he rules because of his strong character and nobility that comes from his self control and honesty in facing his weaknesses. While he and his descendents act as the "lion of God" they are blessed, but when they sin, and fail to confront their sin, the Lord will become a lion to them and tear them apart! Jeremiah 11:9-20, Hosea 5:4, 14.

**Jeremiah 10:23-24.** "23. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.  
24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."

David, Solomon, and their descendents, will succeed or fail in direct proportion to their confrontation with the truth about their nature, and their dealing with their Old Sin Nature sinful tendencies, by confession and spiritual growth. Judah will overcome the tendency to depend on the flesh, and will find strength when he depends upon the power of God. So do

we! Psalms 18:43-50, 78:67-72, Philippians 2:9-13. It is in total dependence upon God that we find our real strength, for then our Old Sin Nature's do not deceive and distort us into false and weak paths.

Like the lion, Judah as a tribe will rise up in strength and grow to prominence through the centuries. Numbers 23:23-24. The old prophet Israel, as Balaam later, draws the analogy of the lion growing in power, failing (stooping) at times, but continuing to grow and develop, and then in it's greatest age of strength and power lying down upon a mountain, the picture of majesty and threat, and no-one dares come near to stir the lion up at this time. The day will come when all threats to the rulership of the house of Judah/David will cease because the heir of that house will rule from the mountain (Jerusalem) and none will dare raise rebellion any more. Daniel 9:24-29, Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:6.

The rulership of the old lion is based on majesty and threat, but the rulership of Judah will be based upon the "willing obedience" of the people who bow to the heir of Judah. This is the first direct reference to the one who comes as Messiah, and his name here is given as Shiloh (While this word's final meaning is "tranquil", it's origin and meaning at this time of usage is unknown. My suspicion is that the name given here is the prophetic name for Messiah, meaning "the one who will alone bring tranquillity to the earth and fulfil the Abrahamic Promise. The people will, after their conquest of the land gather at a place they will call Shiloh, and there the Ark and Tabernacle will rest until the days of Eli).

He is the only one who gathers the people of earth together in peace. The symbol of rulership in the ancient Middle East was the sceptre, or staff of authority, which the king held in his hand, it's bottom resting between his feet when he sat upon the throne to give judgment. 2 Samuel 7:8-16, Psalms 72:7-15, Isaiah 2:2-5, 11:1-13, 42:1-9, 49:1-9, 22-23, 55:3-7, 60:1-5, Zechariah 2:10-13, 8:20-23.

**Verses 11 – 12.** The sceptre of rulership did not depart from the house of Judah, even when evil men corrupted the kingship in it's last days under Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah. The evil men in the line of David did not destroy this promise, for the true line was still there and through the remnant the grace plan of God still flowed. The genealogy of Joseph, the adoptive father of the humanity of the Lord Jesus, is given in Matthew 1:1-17. While his line had the line that was judged, Mary's genealogy in Luke 3:23-38, contained the line of promise.

The writer specially identifies the group of kings who fell and led Judah into captivity in verse eleven. Jeremiah's prophecy needs to be read at that point in the text. Jeremiah 22:24-30. This line of kings through Solomon to Jeconiah is under judgment for their sins and will not rule forever. The sceptre is taken from them, but it never leaves the true line, which is leading to Mary, and to Jesus. Mary's genealogy is given in Luke 3:23-38. This line goes from David through his son Nathan, and then through the centuries to Mary. The sceptre never left this line after David, but it was never held by them in hand, for it awaited the one who was fit to hold it permanently.

The images of these next verses are strange to our eyes and ears. Why mix the metaphors here with asses and grape vines? What does it mean? To understand these verses we must ask one simple question; what did these symbols mean in this day and age? The ass's colt and the foal of the ass, were both the normal riding animals of the day. These men all rode asses. Genesis 22:3, 42:26, 44:3. Kings in majesty or in war, and cavalry, rode horses or camels, but ordinary men, and kings coming in peace rode asses or donkeys.

The vine became the symbol of the nation Israel itself. Jesus himself will use this symbol in John 15. If we take these word pictures, the challenge to Judah is to come in peace to the mature vineyard of Israel. He is to tie his ass to the mature grape vine; to live in the vineyard and care for it. He is to put aside violence and be a man of peace towards his brethren and serve them. The rulership is that of the steward of the vineyard, not the conqueror of it. This is the picture that the Lord builds upon in John 15. This is exactly what occurs with David's ascension to the throne, for he comes to an established nation and the Lord requires of him to care and protect the people and produce peace for them.

The next image is one that could be taken as of total carnage, in marked contrast to the tranquil image of the steward of the vineyard with his ass tied to the mature grape vines. The grape is a symbol of prosperity, but also the treading of the grapes, and the blood red soaked garments of the wine press symbolized judgment and death to the enemies of the king. Isaiah 63:1-3, Zechariah 9:9, Revelation 19:11-16.

The question here is, does this symbol indicate judgment, or is it another way of illustrating the prosperity of the land that Judah will inherit? His eyes are red; but are they red with anger, and the fire of judgment, or just with the reflected redness of the great abundance of ripe grapes from the harvest? The clue to the correct interpretation here is the reference to the whiteness of his teeth; his teeth are described as white as milk. This is a clear reference to health and prosperity in this day and age. The rotting of the teeth is the first sign that there is famine or disease, or "clean" teeth a sign of starvation. Here the picture is of robust health, with shining and healthy teeth.

White teeth are not an image to be associated with judgment. This picture then is the symbol of prosperity, and so the grape press is not the press of wrath of the latter days of the Great Tribulation period, but the prosperity of the days of Judah's greatness under David and Solomon, but even more of the great prosperity of the land given to Judah under the Messiah's rule in the millennial kingdom.

There will be great judgment over Judah at various time, especially during the Great Tribulation period around Jerusalem, but the blessing of Jacob here keeps the focus upon the prosperity there is when Judah is obedient to the call of the Lord their God. It is also a reflection of the great prosperity of the land that Judah will inherit as a tribe. They are to

keep their focus upon the victory that is theirs in their Messiah, not the at times painful path to that victory. Messiah is coming to deliver them, and they must see past the carnage of battle to the certain hope that is coming.

**Verse 13.** Zebulun's name means "dwelling", and it is this that old Israel uses as his springboard to the prophetic word about the portion of the land that will be theirs. Yet, when we see the land given to this tribe under Joshua's guidance, it does not appear to be in accordance with Israel's blessing. They are by Israel's word to be given and dwell in the part of the land that is coastal and closest to the country of the Phoenicians; to the city of Sidon, yet this land will be given by Joshua to Asher and Naphtali.

Zebulun's land will be a "haven" for sea farers, who will find safety within his ports, and the prosperity that this will bring will make them rich. Deuteronomy 33:18-19. They certainly gained from the trade of the coastal lands that flowed through their portion, but there was no coastal land given them under Joshua. Joshua 19:10-16. This fact clearly indicates that this prophecy in Genesis was recorded well before the days of Joshua, for the two do not apparently marry together, and no scribe has attempted to make them do so.

Joshua knew this prophecy from Moses work, so why did he not grant them a coastal strip to ensure the prophecy was fulfilled? The only answer to this issue may be found, either in our interpretation of the meaning of the prophecy, or possibly in the Millennial Kingdom, where the tribe of Zebulun inherit a coastal strip on the Mediterranean whose northern border faces, as all do, what was the Phoenician country. In the Millennial Kingdom the land controlled by Israel will be far larger than that controlled by them at any time before, from the coast by the Orontes River in what is now Syria, to the River of Egypt in the South. Ezekiel 48:1-35. This vast area will be the nation Israel in the Millennium. The tribe of Zebulun in that Millennial period will however live further south than they did under Joshua's division of the land, in a strip of land, below the latitude of Jerusalem, so it is well away from what was Phoenicia.

We are left with an apparent non-fulfilment of this blessing upon Zebulun, and that makes me feel we have a problem with our interpretation or understanding of the words here, that may refer to the blessing of the sea ports/coastal lands, flowing through his land rather than being upon the coast itself. We also need to remember that the blessing of Old Israel applies most powerfully in the "latter days", and may find it's fulfilment during the Great Tribulation period where this tribe may hold land in the northern coastal region, or cover and attack the enemy's supplies routes that pass from the coast through their land area. We will understand this prophetic word when we better see the story of history; from the other side of it. Those of this tribe during the "latter days" will be able to identify what the application is and take advantage of it for victory over their enemy.

**Verses 14-15.** Issachar's blessing is as interesting as the previous one in it's meaning. One great commentator says of this, "ease at the cost of liberty will be the characteristic of the tribe of Issachar". They will prefer to be prosperous to being free of tribute to powerful neighbours. Deuteronomy 33:18-19. They are pictured as a strong ass; quite content to serve and work hard for the rewards that hard work brings. They will be distracted by prosperity and will be content to feel and enjoy that richness in their land and goods, and happily pay tribute to their rulers, be they foreign or local, in order to keep on feeling the joy of their land.

They would inherit under Joshua the fertile Jezreel Valley and the Lower Galilee with it's fertile and rich pastoral lands. They were called, as Israelites to bend and bow their neck in servitude to no-one, rather they were to rule over and destroy the Canaanites of the land. Deuteronomy 20:15-20, Joshua 19:16-23. The book of Judges records the Song of Deborah, Judges 5:12ff, and this records the great feats of prowess on the battle field of the first generation of warriors that took the land given to them, but over time they relaxed and apparently grew fat and lazy. In latter days it may mean they surrender quickly and are enslaved as workers for the enemy army that uses the Jezreel Valley as it's staging place for the move inland.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. It is said that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance against potential enemies. It is also true that the price of liberty is the determined and habitual commitment to physical fitness and a mental attitude that befits a warrior who values his freedom ahead of his ease. There is nothing wrong with enjoying prosperity and rest, as long as you do not expect it to continue in this present world without real effort to maintain it. We live in a fallen world, and those who seek the "easy life" will find it comes at a high price. If we forget that this present world is not yet the Millennial Kingdom, then we will be enslaved by our own lusts, or we will become a slave to other people's desires. Let us remember Paul's advice to Timothy, and keep a soldier's fitness, a soldier's mental attitudes, and live powerfully and strongly in this present world, focused upon serving our Lord, not enjoying the "big easy". 2 Timothy 2:1-10, 11ff.
2. Sexual sin is destructive of the person involved in it and all those around that person. Sexual immorality destroys leadership potential and makes the man or woman who gives in to their temptations in this area unfit to hold any leadership role. All of us are tempted to different sins, and none is worse than any other, but all are to be dealt with, or they will destroy us, and lose us our potential in the Plan of God. Sin is to be faced and eliminated as a driver in our life, or we will go no-where in leadership. We face and deal with our sin, or we face disgrace and lose our leadership potential and our eternal rewards.
3. Anger is as destructive as lusts of other kinds. The uncontrolled anger of the two brothers who led the murders of the men of Shechem is characteristic of their lives and their cruelty leads to the near disappearance of one of

their lines of descendents. Anger is a great sin and leads always to great evil. Anger is very rarely “righteous”, and when it is the decision making as to how it is to be expressed needs to be guided by Bible doctrine, never the anger. Those who cannot control their anger cannot be leaders in God’s Plan. 1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7.

4. We are to be the Lord’s Lions, in majesty, honour, Holy Spirit strength and power, and determined service to our Lord. Judah reminds us that no matter what our past evils we can rise up to full potential if we repent and are restored to full fellowship and service again. God seeks to move forward with us; all that stops this is our disobedience and spiritual slackness.
5. The rise to power of evil men and evil times does not stop the plan of God in it’s advance forward to the coming of the Lord again. The plan is certain and the end secure. The only challenge to ourselves is to be a living part of it through our obedient walk. Let us stand like Judah in his strength, in the truth of God’s Word and Plan, not fall like him in his weakness and stay there in sin. Let us deal with our sins, not relax into them! It is in spirituality that the greatest blessings of life reside.

**Notes**

**GENESIS 49:16-33**

**“16 Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. 18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD. 19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. 20 Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. 21 Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words. 22 Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: 23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) :25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: 26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. 27 Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil. 28 All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. :29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. 32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth. :33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.”**

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 16 – 18.** The tribe of Dan descends from a servant, but their nobility and bravery will be equal to all and superior to most. They will be judges of their nation, and will provide those who are wise to judge the other tribes. This is taken by many commentators to refer to the judge Samson, who comes from this tribe, but we must keep remembering the words of old Israel that began this section of blessings, or better, prophetic words. Verse One. These words refer to the time of “Jacob’s Trouble”, the Great Tribulation, and beyond it into the Millennial Kingdom. So while these words may be prophetic regarding the days of the judges also, their main application is in “latter days”.

The tribe of Dan will inherit parts of the land that will be heavily invaded through the centuries, but will be especially the focus of attack during the Great Tribulation period. These verses give them their technique for dealing with overwhelming forces; they are to adopt guerrilla warfare tactics and strike at the heels of their opponents, for then even the smallest groups can defeat and disorient the larger forces they will face. The image is that of the sand serpent, or “arrow snake”, that lies perfectly still on open and semi open ground and waits for a prey to pass, and then strikes fast into the heel of the animal or person.

People do not look down but around for danger and so they fail to notice the hidden menace under their feet and their heel is bitten and they die. The tribe of Dan will utilize this tactic in the latter days, hiding their troops in dug outs so that they can hit the superior numbers of the enemy forces from hiding, strike fast, and then disappear equally fast into hidden cover under ground, ready to strike again and again. Deuteronomy 33:22, Judges 13:1 – 16:31,

The prophetic word ends with a prayer for deliverance. The earliest Jewish Commentators in the Jerusalem Targum said of this verse, that it had messianic application. “Not for the deliverance of Gideon, the son of Joash, does my soul wait, for that is temporary; and not for the redemption of Samson does my soul wait, for that is transitory; but for the redemption of Messiah, the Son of David, which Thou through thy word has promised to try thy people, the children of Israel; for this, Thy redemption, my soul waits.” They saw that it applied to the “latter days”, when Messiah would come to deliver the people as they fought in the land against the invaders that swarm through it in that last great battle against the Jewish people.

The prophetic word ends with this prayer for the Lord’s deliverance in his grace and mercy, as do many of the Psalms later; for it is these Psalms that will be the prayers of the people in these very latter days. Psalms 14:7, 25:6-7, 40:1-2, 62:1-6, 85:4-13, 119:41-45, 166-176, 123:1-2, 130:1-8.

All Israel will sing these Psalms in the later days, as they wait for the Lord’s return, and they will remember the promises made through Jacob and apply them into the battle field of their day. Zechariah 12:10-14:5. Two thirds of the population of Israel will be killed in the battles, but the surviving third will be brought through the fire to see the Lord’s return in glory to the Mount of Olives. The prophet Isaiah is also given prophetic words to encourage the fighters of that terrible day, and his words will encourage the people and give them solid promises to apply in the midst of the battles. Isaiah 1:24-27, 8:17, 25:7-9, 26:1-6, 30:18-21, 33:2-10. Read through these Psalms and the passages from Isaiah in order, and then your heart will sing as the fighters of that future day will sing, as they await the Lord’s final and full deliverance.

**Verse 19.** Of the tribe of Gad the prophetic word is short, but like Dan, gives them their battle tactic for the latter days. Their task is to “press” their enemy from their rear. They will be overcome and overwhelmed by the numbers of the enemy forces, but they will circle around the superior forces and attack, like lions, from the rear and discomfort their enemies and they will survive to rejoice in the final victory. 1 Chronicles 5:18ff, 12:8-15. They will fight like lions and operate with the swiftness of the deer; both traits being needed in the final phases of the Battle of Armageddon which is the term used to describe the final phase of the attack upon the land by the Western forces in the last days of the Great Tribulation.

**Verse 20.** Asher receives an altogether different prophetic word. He will dip his bread in olive oil, and he will produce from his land royal foods, fit for king’s tables. Deuteronomy 33:24-25. The land given to Asher was the lower slopes of Mount Carmel, stretching northwards to Tyre. Joshua 19:24-31. The vast shale oil and gas fields discovered off modern Israel are all off this area, and it was this prophecy that moved the Israeli explorer to open wells off shore. The gas came on stream in early 2014 and the oil is expected in 2016. While it is interesting, the “oil” here in Moses words is olive oil and speaks of lasting prosperity, not necessarily the temporary wealth produced by limited oil and gas.

This area is now in the Lebanon, but will return to Israel’s control under the Lord again. It was briefly under their control in the battles of the latter years of the twentieth century, but lost again. In the days of Solomon this land did produce the dainties for the tables of King Hiram of Tyre, Solomon’s great friend and ally. It will again be a place of blessing for Israel, and will again be under the control of Asher. Ezekiel 48:2.

**Verse 21.** Naphtali is given it’s word next. This also is a clear instruction given to the forces of Naphtali in their latter days, and it parallels their strengths in the days of Joshua. Their forces are to be fast moving and swift in attack and withdrawal, not pinned down in dug outs, but free moving across the land, to hit the enemy and move on quickly. They are compared to the deer. 2 Samuel 2:18, 1 Chronicles 12:8, Psalms 18:32-33, Habakkuk 3:18-19.

**Verse 22 – 24.** The family of Joseph is compared to a fruitful tree by a deep well, with it’s fruit overflowing and shading the well. The image is of cool, fresh water, with the fruits of the land hanging in rich bunches above the water. It is the strongest possible picture of prosperity, but linked to it is the military prowess and power of the sons of Joseph.

Unlike the cut and thrust battles of the previous tribes, the tribe of Joseph is more besieged and responding to siege, than able to move about and manoeuvre to make darting attacks. Their strength is to keep on firing their arrows at range and keep the enemy pinned down. Those in the area controlled by the tribes of Joseph are thereby given their battle orders for the last battle; they are to lay down supplies of artillery, mortars and guns of all sorts, for their survival depends on pinning down their attackers, and returning their fire with courage and accuracy. They are simply to hold out until the end, by sheer accuracy of fire power, and courage.

They are to be encouraged that the Lord will uphold them in their fight, and the verses above from the Psalms and Isaiah are to strengthen their hands until Messiah comes. We are reminded that sheer malice will drive the attackers from the Western and other Forces that surge through the land in these dark days. They will sorely wound the sons of Joseph in their hill defences around Samaria, and they will do so with hatred driving their actions. Anti-Jewish feeling will rise to its worst satanic fever pitch in these last days, as the Anti-Christ will throw all his malice against Israel, but the Lord will bring them through the fire, but with 60% casualties.

Those who die are not necessarily those who rejected Messiah; they are simply those whose destiny was to give their life in order that others might live. Their lot will be resurrection to newness of life forever, so they do not miss out, and the doctrine of resurrection is to strengthen the survivors of that time, as they know that their dead friends have not died in vain, nor have they missed the blessing God has for them.

The Lord who delivers them and stabilizes them under such great losses of personnel is called the "Shepherd" and the "Stone" of Israel. This is a clear reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd, and this image from the past of Israel will strengthen the soldiers as they fight in the dark days of the battle of Armageddon. Numbers 27:15-21, Deuteronomy 34:9, Joshua 1:1-9, Psalms 23:1ff, 80:1-19, John 10:11.

The Messiah is also described as the mighty Rock from which all stability comes, the sure foundation of the faith and confidence of the people in their dark hour. Deuteronomy 32:4, 7-11, Joshua 1:1-9, Psalms 118:21-26, Isaiah 28:16-21, Zechariah 3:9-10, Matthew 21:42-44, Acts 4:8-12, Zechariah 12:10-14, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4-10, Revelation 18:21, 22:16-21.

**Verses 25 – 26.** The blessing upon the sons of Joseph will stem from the same source as the blessings upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; from the person, and power, and plan, of Almighty God. Deuteronomy 33:27-29. The blessing of Joseph and his sons will be greater in land and prosperity than those of his brothers, and this is an important point to note, for if it applies to "latter days", it means that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh not only survive but prosper in the Millennium, as they prospered in the early days of the nation. Deuteronomy 28:1-14, 33:13-17.

**Verses 27 – 28.** Benjamin is like a wolf who tears his prey. They were the warrior tribe that produced Ehud, Judges 3:15ff, then the first king, King Saul, and his warrior son Jonathan. 1 Samuel 11ff. During the days Israel says he fights and in the evening he divides the things taken off the enemy, so as to live off the things looted from their bodies. The land of Benjamin is tough and rough in terrain and suits rapidly moving small bands that strike quickly and then disappear again into the rocks and dug out caves .

This land does not bear its own food easily. During the times of warfare coming the only way for the troops, and people with them, to live in their cave hide outs, will be to strike the enemy, steal their water, food provisions, weapons, and ammunition and so use the enemy's supplies as their supply train.

This will be the prophetically prescribed tactics for the men of Benjamin in the Great Tribulation period. This ends the blessings of their father towards the tribes of Israel from their father. Right through until the last days when Messiah comes, if they read, believe and apply his prophetic words, they will be delivered.

**Verses 29 – 33.** Old Israel knows he is dying, and is close to his end. He solemnly makes them all swear that they will ensure he is buried in the cave of his father and grand-father. He has already asked Joseph this, Genesis 47:29-31, but here makes sure all know why Joseph is insistent on the burial in Canaan, rather than their father having the honour of burial amongst the kings of Egypt.

This group of twelve men are such that they would fight over the most obvious thing, and the desire Jacob has to lie with his ancestors is to be honoured without dispute. For some or even many they would have desired to have their father's grave nearby, but he knows they will be here only for a time and then their descendents must return to Canaan.

Old Israel gives them a full account of why he wishes to be buried in this cave; he recounts who is buried there and that this is the place he is to lie down in death, for this is the place that he wishes to rise from the dead from. He wishes to stand with his ancestors around him. A mosque now stands over this holy spot, in what is now Hebron, where all the Patriarchs lie, with their key wives, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah. He reminds them all that this land was purchased from the Hittites for burial, so that there is no dispute from the men who now inhabit the place.

Having given this instruction, he draws his legs up, takes his last breath and dies. Notice the phrase Moses uses. "He was gathered to his people". He joins those who have died, in the afterlife, not in soul sleep. The dead are not senseless, nor asleep. The body as it were "sleeps", awaiting its resurrection, but the soul of those who have died go directly to join those who went before. 1 Corinthians 13:10-12, 15:12-22, 35-45, 51-58, 2 Corinthians 5:6-9. The godly dead are active participants in our lives even now, looking on whenever we walk in the Holy Spirit – cheering from the stands of heaven whenever we serve the Lord and bring glory to his name. Hebrews 12:1-2.

## **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. The plan of God is perfect, even down to instructions given to soldiers 3800 years before they will need them! The soldiers of the Great Tribulation period will be able to read these words and be encouraged as to the different tactics that are required in each sector of operations within the land. The Lord truly delivers his people.
2. All we have is given, even down to the Psalms to sing and the prophetic words to rest upon. Each person in their troubled times can rest in the Word of God and take comfort from the promises of the Almighty God who is our refuge and our strength.
3. Those who die in the battles of this future day can look to their father Jacob and draw the same strength that he did, for as their body falls on the land of Canaan, just so it will be raised in that place and glorify the Lord in resurrection forever. They can also know the assurance that until their day of resurrection they rejoice with the Lord in heaven, and miss nothing that others enjoy upon the earth. The service of the Lord means we miss nothing that is in the plan for us. We live and die with our Lord, for his glory and our eternal blessing.

## **PROPHECY**

### **PROPHECIES OF THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL.**

Towards the end of his life Jacob gave a prophetic blessing to each of his twelve sons. These prophetic blessings are given in Genesis 49, dating from some 1800 BC.

#### **REUBEN - Genesis 49:3,4.**

1. Jacob called him the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power (Genesis 29:31,32).
2. The firstborn was traditionally the leader, the priest, and had a double portion (Deuteronomy 21:17).
3. Reuben lost his leadership to Judah, his priesthood to Levi and the double portion to Joseph.
4. He was, sadly seen to be as unstable as water and would not excel because of his sin in Genesis 35:22. "And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard it."
5. Instability was a characteristic of Reuben and his descendants.
  - . Dathan and Abiram, descendants of Reuben, joined the rebellion of Korah against Moses (Numbers 16).
  - . Reuben's tribe was one of only three tribes who requested land on the east side of the Jordan (Numbers 32).
  - . This action almost resulted in civil war (Joshua 22).
  - . Reuben's indecision as a tribe was criticised during the crisis of Judges 5
  - . The tribe of Reuben's numbers fell from 46,500 in (Numbers 1:21) to 43,730 in (Numbers 26:7).
  - . The numbers were such that Moses prayed a blessing on Reuben that they might prosper (Deuteronomy 33:6).
  - . Indecision in the Christian life causes instability (James 1:8).

#### **SIMEON AND LEVI - Genesis 49:5-7.**

1. Simeon is related to the Hebrew word for 'hear' or 'heard' (Genesis 29:33), whilst Levi means 'joined'(Genesis 29:34).
2. Both these brothers were particularly cruel – sadly too often ruled by their uncontrolled anger.
3. It was Simeon and Levi who had killed a large number of the Canaanites by subtlety in Genesis 34.
4. Jacob prophesied that they would be divided in Israel so that neither Simeon nor Levi were to possess a separate portion of the promised land. Simeon's portion of the promised land is in Joshua 19:1-9 with their inheritance within the area allotted to Judah:
5. All these cities were in the arid and barren region, which we now know as the Negev.
6. Simeon also decreases in numbers from the beginning 59,300 (Numbers 1:23) to the end of the wilderness wandering when it was 22,200 (Numbers 26:14).
7. In the reign of Hezekiah a large group of Simeonites migrated into Edom where they conquered the Amalekites (1 Chronicles 4:38-43).
8. Jewish tradition states that all poor Jews came from this tribe.
9. Regarding Levi in Numbers 35:1-4 the Lord commanded that the Levites be given cities instead of a portion of the land. In Joshua 21:4-7 the Levites were given 48 cities scattered throughout the other tribes.
10. Levi, however, had the Lord as their inheritance. Deuteronomy 10:9.
11. They were also supported by the people so that they could give themselves to ministry (Deuteronomy 18:1-5).
12. Moses came from the tribe of Levi, as did Aaron, from whom the Aaronic or Levitical priests are descended. He blessed them in Deuteronomy 33:8-11 with divine wisdom using the Thummim and Urim.
13. The Levites were zealous for a righteous cause (Exodus 32:28,29) and they began to bear the ark (Deuteronomy 10:8).
14. Even today the Levites have privileges in orthodox religious meetings. It is from them that the new priests are being trained by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem.

#### **JUDAH - Genesis 49:8-12**

1. As a tribe there is more said about this tribe than any other. Jacob blessed Judah as the kingly tribe, the future leader of the children of Israel.
2. Judah means 'praise'. - (Genesis 29:35).

3. Moses also blessed Judah, asking for divine protection (Deuteronomy 33:7).
4. Judah's leadership was seen in the sparing of Joseph (Genesis 37:26,27) and he was the spokesman for the group going down into Egypt (Genesis 44:14-34).
5. When the tribes were marching through the wilderness it was Judah that went first (Numbers 10:14).
6. The first tribe to receive a portion of the land was Judah (Joshua 15:1).
7. In the census taken over the 40 year wandering in the wilderness, Judah had the largest tribal population.
8. Judah's conquering ability is shown in King David who was the greatest conqueror other than the Lord Jesus Christ that Israel ever saw.
9. Judah was also protected from onslaughts such as that of Sennacherib. This confirms Moses' blessing on this tribe.
10. The final king is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:5).
11. The Lord anticipated that one day there would be kings of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The first king was Saul of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9:1,2). David however, of the tribe of Judah, commenced the kingly line from which Jesus Christ was born (Matthew 1:6-17) and (Luke 3:23-31).
12. The coming of Shiloh, which means 'to whom it belongs', is a name for the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ who will reign over Israel to confirm the Davidic Covenant.
13. Even though the ten tribes rebelled against Judah's leadership after Solomon, it was the kingdom of Judah comprising the tribes of Judah and Benjamin that survived, the other tribes going into captivity under the Assyrians in 712 BC.

### **ZEBULUN - Genesis 49:13**

1. Zebulun means 'dwelling'. This was Leah's sixth son. - (Genesis 30:20).
2. Jacob's prophecy speaks of Zebulun being related to ships and by implication trade by those ships.
3. It is of interest that in the Hebrew the word 'seas' is used rather than sea. This refers to the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee.
4. In Deuteronomy 33:18,19 Moses amplified the prophecy.
5. The land which Zebulun was allocated is given in Joshua 19:10-16. Located in the western end of the valley of Jezreel, the tribe of Zebulun was traversed by the main route from Syria to Egypt. It is also of note that one of the cities that was allocated to them was Bethlehem of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15).
6. The city of Sidon was a great Canaanite city now sited in Lebanon. Zebulun's tribal allotment was separated from Sidon by the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:24-31). The Asherites were not able to dislodge the Canaanites from their coastal area and in later times the Zebulunites began to infiltrate into this coastal area bordering Sidon. This fulfilled Jacob's prophecy.
7. The most famous member of the tribe was Elon who judged Israel for ten years (Judges 12:11,12).
8. The Zebulunites were brave (1 Chronicles 12:33) and were stable, unlike Reuben.

### **ISSACHAR - Genesis 49:14,15**

1. Issachar was the fifth born son of Leah. At his birth she said, God hath given me my hire. Issacher means 'hire or wages'(Genesis 30:17,18).
2. In the blessing of Moses, Issachar is said to be 'in thy tents' (Deuteronomy 33:18). This is in contrast to Zebulun who is said in the same verse to go out or to trade.
3. To be called a donkey in the ancient world indicated transport. The donkey was also associated with the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9).
4. The tribal allotment to Issachar is given in Joshua 19:17-22 which indicates that he was assigned the fertile eastern section of Jezreel valley. The valley is between two mountains -Tabor and Gilboa.
5. One of the few members of the tribe mentioned in the Scriptures is Tola, who judged Israel for 23 years (Judges 10:1,2).
6. Issachar was brave as a tribe in battle (1 Chronicles 7:1-5). They were also wise (1 Chronicles 12:32). By being wise he was able to carry others burdens.
7. Issachar typifies the person in Galatians 6:2, Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

### **DAN - Genesis 49:16-18.**

1. The name Dan means 'judgment'. He was so named by Rachel who had given to Jacob, Bilhah her maidservant. In Genesis 30:5,6 Dan's birth is recorded.
2. The giving of the handmaid by Rachel to Jacob was in conformity with the customs of the day as shown by the code of Hammurabi.
3. To reinforce the position of Dan and the other patriarchs born to the handmaids Bilhah and Zilpah as full tribes of Israel, Jacob states that Dan shall rule Israel as one of the tribes.
4. The great judge of Dan was Samson (Judges 13), who had the Danite characteristic of disobedience.
5. The tribe of Dan was given a portion of land on the south west Mediterranean coast (Joshua 19:40-48). Because of Philistine pressure, Samson was able to use his immense strength to control for some time their invasions.
6. The Danites accomplished things by cunning rather than by confrontation.
7. Jacob's prophecy showed that Dan would be subject to Satanic influences. An example of this is in the conquest of Laish (Judges 18:1-31). The Danites took 600 fighting men together with a renegade Levite who

brought along a graven image. The Danites conquered Laish and renamed it Dan. They then set up the image for worship.

8. When Jeroboam rebelled against Rehoboam he encouraged idolatry to discourage pilgrimage to the southern kingdom (1 Kings 12:28-30). Jeroboam made two gold calves: one he set in Bethel, whilst the other was erected in Dan. The people went to worship at Dan.
9. In 2 Kings 10:29, whilst there was a revival in Israel, idolatry still raged in Dan.
10. Dan was the last to receive its allotment in the promised land (Joshua 19:40-49).
11. In Revelation 7 during the tribulation period, the 144,000 witnesses come from all the tribes except Dan, with Joseph and Manasseh providing a double portion for the tribe of Joseph.
12. Dan, however, does receive a tribal inheritance in the millennial kingdom (Ezekiel 48:1,2).

#### **GAD - Genesis 49:19**

1. Gad means 'warrior'. When Gad was born to Leah's handmaid Zilpah, Leah said, A troop cometh (Genesis 30:1 1).
2. Moses blessed Gad in Deuteronomy 33:20,21,
3. Gad, together with Reuben and part of Manasseh, were allotted a portion of the land to the east of the River Jordan (Joshua 13:24-28). They were oppressed by pagan tribes in the area, the Ammonites and Moabites.
4. The Gadites earned a reputation as a warrior tribe (1 Chronicles 5:18-20; 12:8).
5. This vigorous state is also reflected in Moses 'blessing that Gad would dwell as a lion and tear the arm.
6. The most prominent Gadite was Jair, who judged Israel for twenty years (Judges 10:3-5).
7. Through perseverance Gad is seen to overcome at last.

#### **ASHER - Genesis 49:20**

1. Asher means 'happy'. Asher was a full brother to Gad. At his birth Leah said, "Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed", (Genesis 30:13).
2. In Deuteronomy 33:24,25 Moses blessed Asher.
3. Asher enjoyed the products of a rich and fertile land, and supplied the delicacies in the ancient world.
4. The most famous descendant of Asher was Anna, the prophetess, who greeted the infant Jesus in the temple in Luke 2:36-38
5. As Asher was one of the so called ten 'lost' tribes who were dispersed in 712 BC, it is of interest that this tribe still had discernible representatives in Jerusalem at the time of our Lord's first advent.
6. The word 'fat' in Genesis 49:20 should be translated 'oil', and complements the blessing of oil in Deuteronomy 33:24. This prophecy has been the basis of some oil exploration in the area allotted to Asher.
7. Asher was able to share good tidings with his brethren. As Christians we should produce royal dainties in the form of divine good and be willing to share this with other believers. Oil often represents the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.

#### **NAPHTALI - Genesis 49:21**

1. Naphtali was a full brother of Dan. His name means 'wrestling', as Rachel noted in Genesis 30:8
2. Moses added his blessing in Deuteronomy 33:23.
3. The hind is a female deer or doe (Psalm 42:1; Isaiah 35:6).
4. The deer was both fast-moving and agile. It was supposedly Naphtali who carried the news swiftly to Jacob that Joseph was still alive.
5. In the famous story of Deborah and Barak, Barak was of the tribe of Naphtali (Judges 4:6). His tribe was singled out in the song in Judges 5 for its bravery.
6. Jesus began his ministry in Naphtali in Galilee and called his disciples in that region (Matthew 4:13-15). Most of his disciples therefore came from that region.
7. Jacob prophesied that "he giveth good words". In fact the gospel came so to speak out of Naphtali.
8. The bringing of the gospel is given in Isaiah 52:7.
6. This is re-echoed by Paul in Romans 10:14,15.

#### **JOSEPH - Genesis 49:22-26**

1. Joseph was the elder son of Rachel, the wife that Jacob had so willingly spent years of his life working for, having been tricked into marrying Leah.
2. Rachel pleaded with the Lord in Genesis 30:1, Give me children or else I die.
3. Joseph means 'may he add', which was a plea for further children. And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son (Genesis 30:24).
4. Moses blessed Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:13-17.
5. Joseph was promised fruitfulness by both Jacob and Moses. The double portion, which by birthright should have been Reuben's, fell upon Joseph, as portrayed by both Ephraim and Manasseh having tribal status by the blessing of Jacob in Genesis 48:1-22.
6. Jacob showed that Joseph has had many trials, but through the strength of God, Joseph had overcome his problems. Joseph was living proof that We know all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

7. In the census of Numbers 1 the tribe of Joseph was the largest, with 79,900, whilst at the end of the wilderness wanderings it had grown to 85,200 (Numbers 26:34,37).
8. Ephraim played a major part in the northern kingdom, which was sometimes known as Ephraim, showing the importance of this tribe, which Jacob has blessed ahead of his elder brother Manasseh (Genesis 48:17-19). This is shown in Hosea 12:1,2.
9. By his example Joseph shows the truth of I Peter 5:6,

**BENJAMIN - Genesis 49:27**

1. Rachel died in childbirth at the birth of Benjamin. As she was dying she called out 'Benoni', which means 'son of my pain'. Jacob, however, called his twelfth son Benjamin, or 'right hand son' (Genesis 35:18).
2. With Joseph having disappeared, the aging Jacob made Benjamin the centre of his affection, not allowing him to go into Egypt on the first trip (Genesis 42:4).
3. Moses blessed Benjamin in Deuteronomy 33:12, And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.
4. Benjamin was allotted the area between Judah and Ephraim, which contained a number of important cities, including Jerusalem. (Joshua 19:28). The covering of the Lord can be associated with the fact that the temple was built in Jerusalem as the place of presence of the Lord God.
5. That the Benjaminites were ferocious and tearing flesh (ravin) as a wolf, is seen on a number of occasions. Some examples are:
  - (a) Ehud, the second judge of Israel, was from the tribe of Benjamin, and assassinated the king of the Moabites, Eglon, using a concealed dagger. He thus released the children of Israel from 18 years of oppression and ushered in a period of 80 years of peace.
  - (b) Benjamin was at the centre of a violent civil war. During this they were particularly violent (Judges 19), resulting in the rest of the tribes taking punitive action against Benjamin. For a while the other tribes were repulsed, with 40 elephs of casualties in the first two days of fighting (Judges 20:21,25), but eventually they were overcome and reduced to 600 men (Judges 20:47).
  - (c) Saul, the first king of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin. His rule was quite ferocious in warfare with his enemies. Abner, commander of Saul's army, was without mercy as he killed Asahel. The effect of Saul's rule was felt in many surrounding kingdoms.
6. This tribal vigour could also be channelled to great blessing, as seen in :
  - (a) Esther and Mordecai, who boldly saved the children of Israel in Persia, thus dividing the spoil, as prophesied in Genesis 49:27.
  - (b) Jonathan, the son of Saul, whose vigour was devoted to the way of the Lord, acting on the promises of God (1 Samuel 14:6,12).
  - (c) Paul, the great oppressor of the church, was a member of the tribe of Benjamin. On conversion, however, his tenacity and zeal were turned to the spread of the gospel under almost constant pressures. Saul the ravin wolf against the church, became Paul the zealous missionary.

**Notes**

**CHAPTER 50****GENESIS 50:1-13**

“And Joseph fell upon his father’s face, and wept upon him, and kissed him. 2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. 4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear. 7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8 And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father’s house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. 9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. 10 And they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abelmizraim, which is beyond Jordan. 12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13 For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre”.

**REFLECTION**

**Verses 1 – 3.** Mourning rituals differ from country to country and the ways we deal with the death of a loved one can be affected by many things. Rituals have changed down the centuries in Egypt, with the process of mummification changing through the centuries and dropping into a very basic wrapping of a body by the Greek and Roman period. The process itself stopped during the Christian period, and funeral and burial rites became a twenty four hour process by Moslem times. It is good to reflect upon the way the Egyptians dealt with the death of Jacob and test ourselves in this matter of the loss of a loved one, and ask ourselves how well our rituals assist us to deal with loss.

Firstly notice that there was open show of emotion by Joseph and an expression of this by tears, and by touching and kissing his dead father’s face. There was no withdrawal from the body as if it was an unclean or scary thing, nor any “stiff upper lip”, but rather a warmth towards the shell that had carried his loved father through this life, and a deep desire to treat the body with the utmost dignity possible within Egypt.

The body was not worshipped, nor was it seen as god-like in any way, but it was to be treated with all dignity possible as a mark of love towards the father of them all. Joseph and the others had forgiven their father his sins and shortcomings and did all they could to honour his wishes. There was no harbouring of any resentments towards him; all there was in each man was a gratitude for the life they had through their flawed father.

There was no attachment to the body itself either, as if the spirit was still there and waiting to leave for a few days, as some believe. Once each had said their goodbyes to the body Joseph called for the special “doctors of embalming”; the men who were in charge of the art of preparation of the body of great men for burial. Within a few hours of Jacob’s death, his body was taken from the family, and placed in the hands of the embalmers, who began their work, and would work on the body for the next forty days. The family would not be involved in this process, but would trust these “undertakers” in the task. They passed over the body of their father and mourned in their own homes for this period without the body. They “let go” of their father’s earthly remains at this point and focused upon their own grief, not the body, although Joseph would have been superintending this process and I believe would have given very specific instructions regarding his father’s body.

Mummification involved a number of incisions made in the body to remove the internal organs that were each washed, anointed, wrapped, and then placed in canopic vases, and then placed in a painted chest that would accompany the mummified body to burial. The brain was not kept, being considered by the Egyptians to be of no significance, for the heart and liver were considered the main seat of emotion and intelligence by them. Many cultures/individuals have a horror that their entire body will not be placed in the ground, as if the Lord needs every bit to ensure they are resurrected. From Jacob’s burial we can see that this is not a requirement. The entire body will, if not treated as this body was, decay away to nothing in many soils. There is nothing visible left of the body after a few years in certain soils. Does this “disappearance” of the body hinder resurrection?

Does cremation, which simply speeds up this process, hinder resurrection? The Word of God is clear in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, that where the body was laid, or disintegrated, or ashes scattered or interred, is where the resurrection body is received. God needs no bits and pieces to accomplish this, for he made all things. Many believers have agonized over organ donation and other issues after autopsies, and all their worries are dismissed by this burial process here before us as of no consequence at all. God does not need all the body, or any of the body, for the resurrection body is an entirely new thing. It is received where the old one was laid, or disappeared, only because that is the Lord’s plan for this.

The resurrection of the dead is the Lord's plan for mankind, and none will escape it by what happens to their bodies after death. Remember the unsaved dead are also raised in new bodies, for it is in bodily form that they are cast into the Lake of Fire. Their cremation and the scattering of their ashes will not hinder the Lord in judging them. So a missing piece of your body, or its disappearance altogether in acid soils, will not hinder your blessing! 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:10-15.

While the private mourning in the household of Israel was going on, the entire nation of Egypt was having a seventy day period of official mourning. This would have involved rituals that would be held daily nation wide in every temple and every public square. The entire nation mourned for this man as for a pharaoh.

Now for most they knew nothing of old Israel, but they knew Joseph, their Saviour, and many would have wept for old Israel, because of who he was to Joseph, as each thought of the grief of losing their own father, and thought of the great debt of gratitude they all had to Joseph for enabling them to be fathers and grand-fathers rather than perishing in the great famine, as they would have without him.

The period of mourning moves to a new level when the body was formally returned to the family after the embalming process. Old Israel would have been wrapped, then placed within an inner coffin, possibly covered in gold leaf. Certainly this inner coffin would have been wonderful, then that coffin would be placed within an outer one of wood or stone ready for its journey back to Canaan. The body would lie in state within Joseph's own temple or house for the last thirty days of official mourning.

The decorations on the coffins of ancient Egyptians of this period are readily seen in museums around the world. Scenes of the person's life are painted within and accounts of their great deeds. Within the bandages of the mummy little statuettes of gods and charms were placed in a set order within the wrappings. To fail to have these in the wrapping was to deny the person within the coffin the trip to eternity. The coffin becomes an introduction to them and their beliefs and attitude, and a guide book to the afterlife.

Within the coffins were also the painted spells of the priests, from the Egyptian "Book of The Dead", which were designed to deal with the journey to the afterlife. None of these things were relevant to Jacob. I cannot help reflecting that Joseph gave very specific instructions to the embalmers about the decoration to be painted on this series of coffins, and left out all the statuettes that spoke of pagan belief and practise.

What was painted on the coffin boxes? The symbols there would be those that mattered to Jacob and Joseph and spoke of the twelve tribes that would follow him. We cannot know any of this for sure, but we can be sure that Joseph had this burial as a very different one than the "doctors of embalming" had ever done before. It would also have been the opportunity for Joseph to prepare himself a series of coffins for his later burial and ensure his own paintings were done in advance to make the right statements about his faith in his afterlife. His coffin will be the "Gospel" for the Israelites.

**Verses 4 – 5.** The official mourning period tells us that the Pharaoh had probably set aside a tomb ready for Jacob if he had wanted it, and that the approach to seek permission to have the body leave Egypt would be an exceptional one. No-one in Egyptian history had sought to be buried outside the land that they believed to be the land of God. To seek burial in Canaan, a wild frontier land, from which they had fled to avoid famine, would have seemed a strange request, and only the most powerful entreaty would have had effect on Pharaoh.

Joseph does not personally approach the Pharaoh about this, and this is another sign of something strange happening here. Joseph must speak to Pharaoh's courtiers not the ruler himself. Now this is strange if the pharaoh was still the one who had received Joseph as the "interpreter of dreams", and made him second ruler of the kingdom. Joseph promises to return again after the burial, but I am left with the conclusion that this Pharaoh is not the same one who made Joseph second ruler, and that he may no longer hold that title or role. He certainly still has great influence and is a prince, an important man, but the lack of personal contact between Pharaoh and him is strange.

Moses leaves us with a hint here that things have changed a little. Joseph is still important and his father's death, and later his own, will be treated with great seriousness and dignity, but he is no longer the ruler he was in the days of famine. This happens in history a lot; the man who delivers his people may often be cast aside when peace or plenty returns again. Winston Churchill is an example of this, for he served as Prime Minister of Great Britain through the Second World War years, but then lost his post in a general election after the War was effectively won.

**Verses 6 – 7.** Pharaoh's answer to Joseph is cold and formal and brief; another clue that things have changed in Egypt. Another indication that the politics of Egypt and the neighbouring countries is not what it was comes as we examine the route taken for the funeral procession, and later note the fact that the Egyptians will not enter the land of Canaan.

Having received Pharaoh's permission to take the body for burial Joseph will need to wait out the full seventy days before leaving, and this time will be spent planning the expedition and the army rations that will be required, for a major representation of the court and temples accompanies Joseph and an army would be in attendance. This is a major incursion into a neighbouring land and diplomatic manoeuvring behind the scenes will change the shortest route into the longest possible one, just as will occur later in the Exodus. Those going are the senior elders/officials of Pharaoh's court, the senior elders of the land (their priests), and the family members of Jacob's household.

**Verses 8 – 9.** The small children were left behind, and possibly the women may have stayed behind to be with them. The senior men of the household all went. With them was a cavalry and chariot army, as was befitting a prince of Egypt and his father. Pharaoh does not come, as politics decreed that he left Egypt only to make war, and as this was a peaceful mission he stays behind with the bulk of the army. This sort of travelling group will be a major event in the Middle East and accounts of this group moving into Canaan will be told as far a field as the Hittite Empire of the far north and Babylon and Ur themselves.

**Verses 10 – 13.** The route travelled avoids the direct coastal route and ensures that the Egyptians do not enter the land itself, but stay on the other side of the Jordan River. This may indicate a desire to avoid the Philistine country in what is now the Gaza Strip.

There was war between these “Sea Peoples” and Egypt when they arrived around this time, and the avoidance of the area may indicate some problems with these people. It may also be the reason for Pharaoh staying behind in Egypt and the reason for such a serious army group accompanying the group. Look at the maps in the back of your Bible and see that the group travels across the Sinai and goes up what is called the “King’s Highway” through what will later be Edom and Moab and arrives at the threshing floor of Atad by a ford of the Jordan River. There great mourning rites were held again by the Egyptians, and all the land knew about it.

Where was this site? The monk and linguist Jerome, who believed he found nearly every Biblical site, believed it to be between ancient Jericho and the Jordan ford, about 2-3 kilometres from each. In this case he probably was right. The Egyptian camp would have covered a considerable area, and would need to be around a raised piece of land for defensive purposes, so a threshing floor would be an ideal centre to their camp.

The body of Israel became the focal point and citadel of their camp while it was there, and then the Egyptian army group waited the return of the brothers. Being about 2 kilometres from the ancient city of Jericho placed them exactly where the Exodus Generation would be 400 years later before the siege of Jericho. They would walk the same path and the centre of their camp may have been the same place. The Tabernacle and the Ark may have rested exactly where the body of Israel rested. This may be why Moses gives such a specific placement of their camp, so that Joshua could ensure they were in the same place as their ancestors had been.

The people of the land of Canaan were aware that a great man of Egypt had died, and their bafflement at why the burial was in Canaan was finally answered when the sons of Jacob came across the river and they then knew fully who it was. Given the route taken I suspect that diplomatic envoys have been going to and fro for some weeks to secure safe passage and assure the people of the lands that Egypt was not declaring war.

The Egyptians stay put on the other side so as not to spark a diplomatic incident and cause a war. I suspect the people of the land came out to pay their respects also to Jacob, for he was great amongst them before he headed south, and Joseph was their Saviour during the famine, (but at a price!). It may be that the tensions from the famine days and the heavy price to buy the wheat through that seven years secured Egyptian control of the area, but resentment has built over the subsequent decade so that there is palpable tension now.

The full reasons for the Egyptians having to stay on the other side of the Jordan are intriguing, but sadly, at this distance unknown. It will be over 400 years before the cave at Machpelah is visited again by the family of the patriarchs. Whatever the reception they received in the land, Moses glosses over it, and the twelve sons of Jacob have no desire to return to the land, and are happy to rejoin Joseph on the journey south again. Something has happened in the land to make it an unpleasant place for them all, even though the rains have returned and the place would be blooming again.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. Burial rituals are important, both for the people’s own mourning processes and for their testimony to the certainty of resurrection. It does not however matter whether people are buried with body (temporarily) intact, or interred after cremation. Cremation does not hinder the resurrection process for the believer or the unbeliever, it is just that burial, if it is possible, is a better picture of the expectation of resurrection than is cremation. If there is no body, due to fire, explosion or nuclear war, then there is to be no concern for the believer, for the Lord does not need the “bits” of the body in the ground for that person’s resurrection. The scattering of the body by malice of an enemy likewise does not hinder their resurrection, for their place of martyrdom becomes the place of their reception of their resurrection body.
2. Mourning is a normal human activity and is to be encouraged as believers share their feelings of loss after a loved one dies. We do not mourn, “as those with no hope”, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, but we do weep for the loss of loved ones, for we will miss their company until we meet them again. Mourning is to be encouraged as a healthy thing, and there are plenty of good role models for this in scripture, from the beginning to the end. Let us encourage those who weep, just as Jesus did, and not be ashamed of our tears at the grave of a loved one, just as Jesus was not ashamed of his tears at the grave of Lazarus. John 11:35. The reality of death is to be wept over, for it reminds us of the sadness of Adam’s sin and the terrible legacy of it upon the human race.
3. Pagan rituals are to be controlled at the death of a believer. Joseph allows the mummification process to be undertaken, but he does not allow, I believe, the pagan associations that normally went with it. This burial and

mourning process will be saturated with Bible doctrines, as ours should be. Let us think of our funerals and ensure they are the last testimony of the truths we hold dear.

**GENESIS 50: 14-26**

“14 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father. 15 And when Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. :16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. 18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. 19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. 21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. 22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father’s house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. 23 And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph’s knees. 24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. 26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”

**REFLECTION**

**Verse 14.** The family returns to Egypt after the burial of their father. They must head back from Hebron across the Jordan River and rejoin the army that waits for them there, and then head back by the King’s highway through Moab and Edom back across the desert to Egypt again. This was the road that the Egyptians controlled in this day, and it passed by the mines they used and was a safer route than the coastal one that clearly was unsafe or unwise to use at this time.

The journey would have taken several weeks by foot, or even on horse back, for their speed was that of the slowest animal and that would be the wagons. There were lots of times to talk and lots of time to reflect upon life as it was in Canaan, and as it was now, as they saw the land after the famine. At no point do any of them express the desire to return to the land of Canaan in their life time. They are content to rejoin Joseph in Egypt, although as they head back there they all start to think about what Jacob’s death might mean for them, and whether Joseph really has forgiven them, or is he just waiting until they are back so that they can all be imprisoned and killed for their selling of him as a slave all those years ago.

**Verses 15 – 16.** These men have difficulty accepting the gracious attitude that Joseph has had towards them and on the return journey they start to think about their fate and his sense of justice. Will he kill them for what they did, now that their father is dead. Moses gives us a little hint about the order of travel for them all also in this section, and this may have contributed to their sense of paranoia. The eleven brothers are travelling separate from Joseph. He is not riding along with them, for he is an official and is with the diplomatic contingent of Egyptians riding in a chariot. They are away from him surrounded by troops that will probably be under his direct orders. They are absolutely powerless to protect themselves and must rely on the Lord, but old habits die hard, and so they invent a story to try to keep them safe, just as they invented a story to their father about Joseph’s fate! Genesis 37:31ff, Psalms 14:4-6, 58:10-11, Proverbs 28:1, 29:23-27.

**Verses 17 – 18.** The story is, I believe, an invention, for Jacob knew the heart of Joseph and there was no danger at all to the brothers, for Joseph had proved over the last fourteen years his love and care for his family and their children. As Joseph hears their words he weeps, for he knows they don’t know his heart, nor have they forgiven themselves for their great evil. They prostrate themselves before him and once again tell him that they are all his servants, confessing their sin to him again. Genesis 37:5-11, 42:10, 44:16, James 5:16. He sees their hearts, for they fear that his character is like their own. They couldn’t trust each other and so they still don’t feel that they can trust him.

Joseph however operates upon grace and he reminds them of that, and he tells them that it is the Lord who has made the difference with him, and made him the man to make the difference for them. They are saved because of the Lord’s grace and Joseph operates within that sphere, not the sphere of human vengeance. Joseph is able to freely say the “Lord’s Prayer”, for he has forgiven freely, and so is able to rest in God’s forgiveness of him. Joseph’s attitude is to be our own, even if we have suffered the indignity and injustice that he suffered. Matthew 6:9-15, Ephesians 4:30-32, Colossians 3:12-14, Galatians 6:9-16.

**Verses 19 – 20.** Joseph does not avoid the truth of their actions. He reminds them that they meant evil to him, but that God turned things around and has produced good for them. Romans 8:28. The Lord has turned out all things for their good, and the Lord has placed Joseph in the place to be able to keep on helping them and he will be obedient to the Lord, and will not take the Lord’s place and execute vengeance, as had Levi and Simeon upon the men of Shechem. Joseph will not act for God and will neither seek nor execute vengeance. He has left his case in the Lord’s hands and is

content to be the Lord's servant of grace. Do a group study of the following verses on the topic of fear, and gain the comfort that Joseph wants his brothers to have. Matthew 14:25-33, Luke 24:36-49, Acts 3:12-21, Romans 8:28, 12:17-21, Hebrews 10:30-37, 12:28-29.

**Verses 21 – 22.** Joseph's standards are those of the Lord Jesus Christ. He loves those who were his enemy by their behaviours. Matthew 5:43-48, 6:14-16. His promise to them is that he will continue to feed them and their children. His loving commitment to them is a life long one. Romans 12:17-21, 1 Thessalonians 5:15, 1 Peter 3:8-17. Joseph is given long life also, dying finally at age 110. This was an old age, even for this day. The ages of the Patriarchs decline through the years, and settle around 70 years of age for mankind for the post flood world.

As more information comes in on the effect of the rays of the sun on aging, it would appear that after the vapour canopy dispersed at the flood there was a decline of the protective screen around the earth in the thousand years afterwards, with a flow on effect on the ages that people lived to, from well over a hundred to around the 70 mark for most of the biblical period. Some today still live to great ages, with a number through recent centuries

**Verses 23 – 26.** Joseph lived to see his great grandsons mature. He was blessed to see an extensive family lineage around him, and had the joy of seeing his great grandsons sitting upon his knee and being able to hold them and love them. Job 42:16-17, Psalms 128:1-6. He speaks to his family members (these being Ephraim and Manasseh) and makes very specific orders for how his body is to be treated after his death, for he knows the plans of the pharaoh regarding his burial.

He would have given specific instructions about the embalming process and the decorations to be on his coffins, for he intends his coffin to be a pictorial Bible for the Israelites through the next 300 years. He is going to ask for his body not to be buried, but to be left lying in state in a secure place where it can be visited and touched. This was most unusual and required very specific instruction and numerous witnesses for his wishes to be granted, for he would have been destined by Egyptian protocol for burial in the Valley of the Kings.

Joseph wants his body in the coffin to be the "Gospel" message of the coming deliverance of the people from Egypt, for at the right time in the Plan of God they are to leave Egypt and re-settle in the land of Canaan. Their sojourn in Egypt is exactly that; they are not to stay. The promises of God to the patriarchs will be honoured and the Lord will give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance, and it is to there that they must go. When they go, 300 years in advance, Joseph tells them that they are to take his body back into the land of his birth and bury him there. Moses will continually remind the people of these promises. Exodus 3:13-23, 33:1-3, Numbers 32:11-15, Deuteronomy 1:8, 6:6-15. The people must stand like Joseph in faith and obedience to the revelation of God, or they will not inherit the land.

When they leave the land of Egypt under Moses leadership they take the coffin of Joseph and it is their banner to lead the people out of Egypt to their deliverance from slavery, as he had been the one to bring their ancestors into the land for their deliverance from famine. Exodus 13:17-22. When they entered the land the descendents of Joseph decided where he was to be buried. Joshua 24:32.

### **PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATION**

1. We are to live by grace, through faith. It is hard for unforgiving people to relax in the forgiveness of the Lord, and that is our daily challenge. Let us praise God for His grace towards us and rejoice and live in that loving mercy and grace. We are forgiven, Hallelujah!
2. Joseph enjoys the blessing of great age, as he sees his great grand-sons grow and serve the Lord. It is the greatest joy to see your children serve the Lord. Numbers of grand-children is nothing if they grow up as pagans. Let us bring up our children in the ways of the Lord, that our old age may be blessed.
3. Our funeral is to be our last testimony as to what we stood for in this life. Believers ought to take care to instruct their relatives and descendents as to what they want, so that the right things are said and done to amplify the Gospel message. Joseph was careful to prepare for his death, so that for nearly 400 years his coffin was a blessing to his people. Let us ensure we leave a godly legacy after our passing, so that any generation that follows us may bless our name for the grace gifts they have received from us through the power of God that worked through our life on this earth.

**Hebrews 11:22** "22. *By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.*"