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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Genesis 42.

(2017)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Genesis 42.

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### Topics.

- Jacob sends ten of Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy grain.
- Joseph's brothers bow before him and he accuses them of being spies.
- Joseph puts his brothers into custody for three days.
- Joseph tells his nine brothers to take grain and bring their youngest to him.
- Joseph turns from his brothers and weeps and binds Simon.
- Joseph secretly has his brothers' money placed in their sacks of grain.
- Joseph brothers tremble when they discover the money in their sacks.
- The brothers return to Jacob their father and tell him all that happened.
- Jacob accuses his sons of bereaving him of Joseph, Simon and Benjamin.
- Reuben tells Jacob to kill his two sons if he does not bring Benjamin back.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

**The previous chapter:** in chapter forty-one the Pharaoh had a dream of seven plumb cows and seven thin cows and a dream of seven plump ears of grain and seven thin ears of grain and Joseph interpreted the two dreams. Pharaoh exalted Joseph to his right hand side and changed his name to Zaphenath-paneah and gave him Asenath the daughter of Potiphera in marriage. Joseph stored grain in various cities of Egypt for seven years and Asenath gave birth to Manasseh and Ephraim. The chapter ended with the seven years of famine spreading over all the land and the people coming to Joseph to buy grain.

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### Jacob Sends Ten of Joseph's Brothers to Egypt to Buy Grain.

Genesis 42:1-5 ----- <sup>1</sup>When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" <sup>2</sup>And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." <sup>3</sup>So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. <sup>4</sup>But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him. <sup>5</sup>Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Traders with their camels carrying all sorts of merchandise such as gum, balm, and myrrh etc., would travel a common route from the land of Canaan to Egypt (Gen. 37:25) so it would be only a short matter of time until Jacob either heard that there was an abundance of corn in Egypt or actually saw the corn his neighbours had brought in Egypt and brought home.

**Why do you look at one another?** (v1) during this time of drought and rainless season of a famine Jacob and his family, their servants and all their livestock would be languishing. Some may have even begun to die of various diseases, because of insufficient nourishment. Jacob seeing such widespread famine all around him asks his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" meaning, "why are you looking upon each other as helpless men not knowing what to do, isn't it obvious, why are you standing here and not going to Egypt to get food to provide for your eleven families and household?"

**Ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt:** (v3) unbeknown to Jacob and his eleven sons Joseph is the ruling as governor over Egypt and Jacob has no intention of allowing Benjamin to go with his other sons, so he sends the remaining ten.

**Jacob did not send Benjamin:** (V4) for the following reasons: -

- He was the last son born and the youngest of all Jacob's sons and therefore the son of his father's old age.
- He was the only remaining son of Rachel (Jacob at this time believed Joseph Rachel's firstborn had been torn by wild beasts and was dead).
- He was the more beloved son since he was the only full brother of Joseph and now Jacob believed Joseph to be dead.
- If he was killed on the journey either by disease, sickness or fatigue because of the famine or by an enemy Jacob believed he would have no child of Rachel left as he thought Joseph to be dead.

**Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother:** (v4) Benjamin is called Joseph's brother, because they were the only sons born to Jacob and Rachel who Jacob loved. (Gen. 29:18-20)

**Joseph's Brothers Bow before Him and He Accuses them of Being Spies.**

Genesis 42:6 -----<sup>6</sup>Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.

Joseph was governor over the land (not the land of Canaan), but the land of Egypt; under Pharaoh, he had the chief and sole authority over the grain and the storage and selling of it. It would have been sold according to his instruction in all cities, towns and villages by the wise and loyal officers and overseers who he had appointed over the administration and management of the granaries.

Joseph would have been expecting his brothers to come and buy grain so it is most likely he either set himself up near the granary closest to his brothers dwelling place or gave instructions to those in charge of the granaries to keep their eyes open for them.

**Joseph's brothers bow before Joseph:** (v6) Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt and bowed themselves before Joseph with their faces to the ground fulfilling the dream Joseph had in the following verses: -

- Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: <sup>7</sup>Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup>His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" (Gen. 37:5-8).

The ten brothers understood Egypt's unfavourable attitude toward the Hebrews and no doubt to win the governors favour, not knowing it was Joseph, but believing him to be a most powerful Egyptian ruler who had control over all the grain in Egypt bow their faces to the earth which was the common method of greeting in eastern nations and in this action their sheaves bowed to his sheaf. (Gen. 37:7).

**Ponder for a moment**

The thoughts that would have been going through Joseph's mind as he watched his brothers bow their faces to the earth before him, unknowingly fulfilling the dream he had almost twenty-years ago (Gen. 37:7). There would have been no way in which he could have foreseen such a thing ever coming to pass during his early troubled years.

## Joseph Recognized His Brothers, but He Spoke Roughly to Them.

Genesis 42:7-8 ----- <sup>7</sup>Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." <sup>8</sup>And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

**Joseph knew his brothers:** (v7) unlike his brother who did not recognise him (for reasons given below) Joseph did recognise his brothers even though he had been separated from them for about twenty years. Following are some of the reasons Joseph would have easily recognised them: -

- They were adult men when he was separated from them so whatever changes had occurred in their appearance would not be great.
- They would have clearly spoken the Hebrew language and been dressed in their usual Hebrew garments.
- It is possible a brother may not recognise a single brother after twenty years, but Joseph had ten brothers before him, which means it would be practically impossible not to recognise some or most of them.
- He would have been expecting them to come to buy grain at some time.

**Joseph treated his brothers like strangers and spoke roughly to them:** (v7) it would be an injustice to Joseph's godly character to suppose that this harshness stems from vindictive feelings or from a spirit of revenge, especially when we read in chapter fifty: -

- His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." <sup>19</sup>But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup>So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (Gen. 50:18-21).

Joseph never indulged in any form of revenge toward his brothers who had so cruelly injured him, so why did he treat his brother in the manner he did. Following are some suggestions: -

Not seeing his full brother Benjamin (only he and Benjamin were born to Rachel who Jacob loved), he may have suspected that they had treated Benjamin in the same way they had treated him. To discover the truth, since at this stage it is unlikely he would have trusted them, and discover their affection for Benjamin he acts toward them as an Egyptian ruler would act toward Hebrew foreigners, to keep them under some level of fear so they would speak the truth and not lie to him as they might tend to do if they knew he was the brother they had sold as a slave.

In order to elicit some much-longed-for information concerning the state of his father and his family, he chose to speak in the authoritative tone of the governor and perhaps with the hope that when he did reveal himself to them they would truly repent of what they had done.

He was fully aware of the evil they were capable of so it is possible that his ultimate and final response to them would depend upon their change in character or lack of it and therefore he desired to discover their true heart attitude before revealing himself to them.

**Joseph brothers did not know or recognise him:** (v8) it should not be considered strange that his brothers did not recognise Joseph for the following reasons: -

- He spoke in the Egyptian language and was clothed in official linen robes as a prince. We know he spoke to them in Egyptian, because (v23) tells us Joseph had an interpreter translating his words to them which means he spoke to them not in his native Hebrew language, but in Egyptian.

- He was seventeen when he was sold as a slave to the Ishmaelite's and now after about twenty years of separation his appearance would have changed from a lad to an adult man.
- He stood before them in dignity and great grandeur and in power and authority as governor of Egypt with an entourage of attendants surrounding him.
- He was called by his Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah and was married to Asenath the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. (Gen. 41:45). They may not have met her at this time, but they would more than likely have heard on their travel to Egypt and while amongst the crowds in Egypt that he was married to Asenath.
- They had never heard of Joseph during all the time of their separation and could never have imagined that the young boy they hated would have risen to such a magnificent royal status.

All these things together prevented the ten brothers from recognising Joseph.

### **Joseph Remembered His Dreams and tells His Brothers they are Spies.**

Genesis 42:9-14 ----- <sup>9</sup>And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land." <sup>10</sup>They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. <sup>11</sup>We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies." <sup>12</sup>He said to them, "No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see." <sup>13</sup>And they said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more." <sup>14</sup>But Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you. You are spies.

**Joseph remembers his dream:** (v9) the dreams referred to are the dream he had when he saw a God given vision in his mind of him and his brothers binding sheaves in the field, and his sheaf arose and stood upright and his brothers sheaves gathered around his sheaf and bowed down to it. His brother's response to this dream was of extreme disdain, they in hostile pride said, "Are you indeed to reign and rule over us? And they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. (Gen. 37:5-8).

From this dream we see that the last time Joseph was with his brothers about twenty years ago they hated him, they were extremely hostile toward him and at that time despised him with such great hatred that there was no way in which they would ever bow themselves down to him, in fact sometime after this they plot to murder him. Having these things in mind helps us understand the following verses.

**Joseph said to them you are spies:** (v9) this accusation can carry the following two ideas: -

1. It was possible Joseph may have some suspicions that they had come from their famished land to spy out Egypt's strongholds with the intention of returning with a band of men and invading the weakest city and taking all its grain.

Remember when Joseph last knew his brothers they were fierce, heartless warriors. They hated him, plotted to kill him, but instead threw him in a pit and sold him to the Ishmaelite's (Gen. 37:18-28).

Added to this they slaughtered all the men of the city of Shechem, plundered the city of all its wealth and took all their little ones and their wives captive, because one man had forced himself on their sister Dinah (Genesis chapter 34) so he had good reason not to trust them.

2. Joseph himself did not believe they were spies, but was accusing them of being so to give him a just reason to keep them in custody for three days so that he could search out the truth as the Egyptian governor of the land concerning their father, Benjamin and his family. By accusing them of being spies they to defend themselves are put in a position of giving a full account of themselves and in

doing so Joseph would learn about his father and more importantly learn if they had affection for Benjamin or looked upon him with the same hostile disdain they had looked upon him with.

**To see the nakedness of the land:** (v12) since this is in the context of Joseph accusing his brothers of being spies, the expression, nakedness of the land, means they have come to spy out Egypt's fortresses garrisons and cities to discover the weak parts of it and where they could best make a surprise attack.

Every traveller in the East travels under a certain level of suspicion, but in the days of Joseph the whole Semitic race was especially looked upon in Egypt with distrust since they were considered an abomination to the Egyptian people.

- They served Joseph by himself, and his brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. (Gen. 43:32).

Also keep in mind the Egyptians would be fully aware of the plagues the God of the Hebrews had inflicted upon Egypt during the Exodus and the parting of the Red Sea so the Egyptians had good reason to be suspicious of them.

Egypt had built a number of fortresses to protect the land from Hebrew invasions (especially if they had united with other nations) so the arrival of ten united strong Hebrew men would naturally be taken aside by Egypt's highest officials to discover if they had come for peaceful reasons or to search out what parts of the land are the weakest, the most defenceless, and less fortified, and the easiest to invade.

The Egyptians had good reason to suspect that the neighbouring nations being in great distress round about them and hearing that Egypt had an abundance of corn might form a strong band of warriors come upon them and take away their corn by force. This may also be one of the reason Joseph accused his brothers of being spies, so that his Egyptian officials and servants would know that he has fully examined them and discovered their true motives before he showed them favour.

#### **Joseph puts His Brothers into Custody for three days.**

Genesis 42:15-17 ----- <sup>15</sup>By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. <sup>16</sup>Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." <sup>17</sup>And he put them all together in custody for three days.

The expression, "By the life of Pharaoh," (v15-16) carries the idea that if they are lying and they are proved to be spies they would be put to death. This is exactly how an Egyptian ruler in Joseph's exalted position would speak to those suspected of being spies.

**Send one of you, and let him bring your brother:** (v16) Joseph knowing how his brothers treated him is concerned for the well-fare of Benjamin who is his full brother since only Joseph and Benjamin were born by Rachel the wife Jacob loved. For this reason, he would feel a very close bond to Benjamin and have a deep desire to know if they had treated him kindly or treated him as they had treated him.

Joseph is not acting from any sense of revenge or bitter spirit, but because he cares about Benjamin and does not fully trust his brothers to be speaking the truth. If the one sent returns with Benjamin they would be proved to be honest men, but if not they would not only be treated as dishonest men, but also as spies and put to death.

Joseph's proposal to send one of them no doubt strikes fear into their hearts, since the return of only one would not only be dangerous, but also bring great stress upon their father as all kinds of fearful imaginations would race through his mind, such as the thought that the remaining brothers would be killed and if Benjamin was taken to Egypt he also maybe killed. For these reasons they cannot agree to Joseph's plan.

**He put them all together in custody for three days:** (v17) imagine the fearful discussions they would have had during these three days and ponder for a moment the amazing wonder of Bible prophecy, all of these seemingly strange and mysterious events are part of the fulfilment of Joseph's dream of his brothers bowing down to him.

**Joseph tells His Nine Brothers to take Grain and Bring their Youngest to Him.**

Genesis 42:18-20 ----- <sup>18</sup>On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: <sup>19</sup>if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, <sup>20</sup>and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so.

**On the third day:** (v18) though there is not much mentioned in this chapter concerning the conversations Joseph had with his brothers the following chapter shows that they did have long conversations and that Joseph did ask them many questions concerning his father and Benjamin (Gen. 43:3-8). It is also certain that during their three days in custody Joseph heard much of his brother's conversations and saw their fear and being aware of his famishing father and his household, he chooses to reverse the number of brothers that would stay behind and that would go and allows nine to return home and retains one in Egypt.

**Do this and you will live:** (v18) this statement obviously implies that if they do not do what Joseph says they will be put to death. The authority Joseph had as ruling Egyptian governor was such that he had the power of life and death over the people in the land he ruled over. He as a just ruler gives his brothers just opportunity to prove that what they had told him was true, before putting them to death on suspicion of being spies.

**For I fear God:** (v18) though Egypt had many gods they did (at least at this time) believe in one supreme God above all other gods, in the following verses the Pharaoh himself proclaims the one supreme God: -

- Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" <sup>39</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. (Gen. 41:38-39).

This signifies that the true God was still known in Egypt. Joseph statement, "I fear God," signifies to his brothers that he is a believer of the one great Almighty God that they and their father know and worship. Joseph acknowledgment of God signifies to his brothers that he will deal with them according to God's laws of justice.

**Carry grain for the famine of your households:** (V19) though the brother's honoured their aged father as the patriarch of their race, they now had twelve separate households that had to be supplied with food. The distance from Hebron to Egypt is around 400klms, supposing they walked 6klm per hour and walked for 6 hours per day that's around 36klms each day which means it would take around 11-12 days maybe less if they walked faster and longer each day.

When the ten brothers arrived in Egypt they would have had with them all the donkeys, camels, wagons and servants that they would have needed to return with the grain required to feed their twelve households and since it was about an eleven days journey they would not be wanting to make the journey to often.

No reader should be surprised that such a large caravan of camels, donkeys, wagons and servants is not mentioned, as it is common for Scripture to leave matters not important to the story to the intelligence, reasoning and logic of the reader.

**Bring your youngest brother:** (v20) not only did Joseph have a great desire to be re-united to his full brother Benjamin, but being a man full of wisdom it would be safe for us to suppose that he also knew that bringing Benjamin back was also the best way to entice his father to come to him. Joseph's brother's words, "And they did so," (v20) are better read "And they agreed to do so," since they are still with Joseph in the following verses.

## **The Brothers Acknowledge they are Guilty Concerning Joseph.**

Genesis 42:21 ----- 21 Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us."

Ponder the brother's words for a moment, "We saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen" (v21) these words magnify to us the cold heartedness these brothers had toward Joseph and the ruthlessness and violent way in which they treated him. This should also give us greater insight into why Joseph does not trust what they say to him.

During their three days in custody their conscience took them back some twenty years and filled them with guilt for the crime they had committed against Joseph. Their unexpected affliction has brought them to believe that God was pursuing them in the land of Egypt to bring upon them punishing justice for their sin. These verses highlight the power of conscience.

Many troubling times and joyful times would have passed over the brothers lives in the last twenty years and yet the very thing that comes to their mind is that of plotting to murder their brother and for profit selling him to the Ishmaelite's as a slave and lying to their father about it. Though those who commit such horrific crimes from jealousy and hatred may not get caught, conscience forever holds them guilty (v21-22).

God has created the human mind in such a way that according to the measure of our crime conscience by the power of guilt will take vengeance on us accordingly, until we truly repent and when and where possible do all we can to heal any hurt we may have caused and make amends for whatever wrong we may have done.

## **Reuben admits they Sinned against Joseph and Joseph Binds Simeon.**

Genesis 42:22-23 ----- 22 And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." 23 They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them.

These verses show that Joseph spoke to them not in his native Hebrew language, but in Egyptian and had an interpreter translating his words to them and theirs to him. Obviously this is another reason they did not recognize him. Reuben being the oldest and the one who had been most concerned for the life of Joseph, now becomes the head speaker, justly rebuking his brothers for their hardness of heart. His words, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy?" (Gen. 37:21) show that he tried to save Joseph when they were plotting to murder him.

He clearly discerned that they were intent on getting rid of Joseph and knew he had no power to physically overcome them to protect Joseph, so with the intention of coming back later to rescue Joseph he suggested that they put him in a dry pit. However, when he did come back to save Joseph he found that he was no longer in the pit. (Gen. 37:22-29).

The expression, "A reckoning for his blood is now required," usually applies to those who have murdered another, it means that because they have taken the life of another their life should be taken. Though the brothers hadn't actually killed Joseph they did at first intend to and afterward disposed of him by selling him as a slave and then telling their father that he had been killed by a wild animal. Now after being separated from him for twenty years or so they most likely thought him to be dead so in this sense they were accountable and held guilty of his death.

## **Joseph turns from His Brothers and Weeps and Binds Simeon.**

Genesis 42:23 ----- 24 Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

Joseph, after seeing Reuben's affectionate concern for him and listening to his rebuke of his brothers is so deeply stirred that he cannot withhold the rising emotion and tears that are welling up within him, and being fully aware that he has



to keep up the stern and sever image of his Egyptian countenance as governor of the land and stranger to his brothers he retreats to a private room for a time to recover his composure. Once he regains his Egyptian composure he returns to his brothers and takes Simeon from them and binds him before them.

This raises the question, "Why take Simeon?" Following are four possible answers.

- 1 Reuben the oldest brother clearly tried to save Joseph so it would be unreasonable to keep him bound in Egypt so the most logical son to withhold would be the next oldest which was Simeon.
- 2 It is reasonable to suppose that Joseph bound and withheld Simeon, because he was the ring leader in the plot to kill him and perhaps the most violent in casting him into the pit.

This idea is also supported by Simeon's bloody and fierce character: -

- On the third day, when they were sore, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males. (Gen. 34:25).
  - Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. <sup>6</sup>Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstrung oxen. (Gen. 49:5-6).
3. It is very likely that Simeon was the most, cruel and hardhearted among them and perhaps the least in his father's affection because he and Levi had caused Jacob's name to stink to the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (Gen. 34:30), because they took their swords and slaughtered all the males in the city of Shechem. (Gen. 34:20-26).
  4. It is also very possible that because of Simeon's fierce nature Joseph may have feared that upon his return he would vehemently oppose sending of Benjamin to Egypt or attempt to gather a fierce band of warriors together and make an attack on the city as he did at Shechem to rescue whoever Joseph had withheld.

**He bound him before their eyes:** (v24) this he would have deliberately done to terrify them for the purpose of making a deep impression upon their minds and hard hearts to let them know what to expect if they did not obey his orders and bring Benjamin back. However, it is most likely that he gave Simon some liberty once they had gone.

### **Joseph Secretly has His Brothers Money Placed in their Sacks of Grain.**

Genesis 42:25-26 ----- <sup>25</sup>And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them. <sup>26</sup>Then they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed.

Joseph gives orders to those in his service to supply his brothers with corn and grain, and give them food, drink and what they need for the journey. He then does something strange, he tells his servants that while they fill the sacks with grain they are to place the brother's money in the sacks without their knowledge.

Why not simply give the money to his brother we might rightly wonder? Joseph being the governor over the entire land of Egypt and owning all the storehouses of grain certainly didn't need the money, so it is very likely he did not want to take his father's and his families hard earned money.

However, if he had given it to them he would be in the awkward position of explaining why he had done so, since in their eyes and their knowledge he was the stern powerful and fierce Egyptian ruler to be feared which is at this time how he wanted them to see him. Had he now shown them charity and kindness, this image would instantly crumble. Therefore, to avoid any difficult explanation he secretly had the money hidden in their sacks.

## **Joseph Brothers Tremble when they Discover the Money in their Sacks.**

Genesis 42:27-28 ----- <sup>27</sup>And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place (the inn in KJV), he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. <sup>28</sup>He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

Here we only read of one brother opening his sack and finding the money, but in (Gen. 43) we are told that when they came to a lodging place they each opened their sacks, and discovered their money in them (Gen. 43:21). It was probably not convenient to open all the bags on the dusty open road especially if they were near a resting place and therefore would have waited.

**Their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another:** (v27) take a moment to imagine the fearful shock, confusion and bewildering thoughts that would have been racing through their minds: -

1. They had just left a most fearful powerful Egyptian ruler (or at least they believed they had) and now they discover their money in their sacks. Which means they had not paid for the grain and therefore could be accused of being thieves and if caught cast into an Egyptian prison never to see their homeland again.
2. They would never have given any thought or even considered the idea that this maybe an act of kindness on the part of the governor of the land who they had spent so much time in conversation with, partly because Joseph had maintained the image of an Egyptian governor to be feared, partly because they were fully aware that the Egyptians abhorred Hebrews (Gen. 43:32), and partly because their minds were struck with fear and dread because of the guilt of their sin.
3. Since they had already been charged of being spies it is also very likely that they feared that their money was put into their sacks as a deliberate scheme to entrap them should they be pursued, captured and taken back to Egypt and charged with fraud and as thieves taking the corn without paying for it.

It is the natural response of the mind when filled with such terror to automatically go into overdrive vividly thinking of the worst possible scenarios even though their maybe no real need to do so.

**What is this that God has done to us?** (v28) it is interesting to notice that no matter who had placed the money in their sacks they acknowledge the overruling hand of God as doing it to them, because of the evil, unnatural and cruel way they had treated their brother and because their conscience loudly and strongly accused them of their sin.

## **The Brothers Return to Jacob their father and Tell Him all that Happened.**

Genesis 42:29-34 ---- <sup>29</sup>When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, <sup>30</sup>"The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us and took us to be spies of the land. <sup>31</sup>But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we have never been spies. <sup>32</sup>We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.' <sup>33</sup>Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. <sup>34</sup>Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men, and I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land."

The nine brothers with their donkeys, their servants and the sacks of grain finally arrive in their homeland and tell their father Jacob all that had taken place.

**You shall trade in the land:** (v34), meaning if they return with Benjamin they will have proved themselves to be honest in all that they had said to Joseph and therefore he will give them freedom to trade in all the land of Egypt, not only for corn and grain, but for any other product they might desire to sell or purchase.

## **Jacob Accuses His Sons of Bereaving Him of Joseph, Simeon and Benjamin.**

Genesis 42:35-36 ---- <sup>35</sup>As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. <sup>36</sup>And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me."

Jacob is greatly troubled partly because of the bundles of money and partly because Simeon had not returned. Knowing his sons as he did and having some distrust in what they say, he may have feared that they had provoked the Egyptians and stolen the money.

Jacob had given up Joseph as being torn and killed by a wild animal, and now Simeon is in captivity in Egypt and the brothers want to take Benjamin back to Egypt. Jacob fears he is going to lose another two sons and perhaps even all of them if they had stolen the money as he may suspect. Is it any wonder he cries, "All these things are against me?"

In actual fact though Jacob was completely unaware of it at this time, "All these things were actually for him." All these things were working together for his good, and the good of his family and it was through these events that the Hebrew race was saved from extinction and because of this the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour of the world came and the Good News of the Gospel is being spread around the world.

**You have bereaved me of my children:** (v36) here we read of Jacob's deep lamentation, he considers Simeon as already being dead, since he is in the power of a fierce Egyptian governor (or at least he believed him to be, based upon his son's testimony). He considers Joseph as being dead (also based upon his son's testimony) and now considers Benjamin the only remaining son of his loved wife Rachel as being already taken from him.

Adding to his lamentation is the fact that he placed the blame for all this (imagined) loss upon the remaining sons. This great lamentation expresses a painfully sorrowful state of feeling and shows how difficult it is for even a godly person to submit to the course of God's sovereign will.

Little could Jacob know that in some mysterious way all these things were working together for his and his families good during the seven years of famine and for the good of his future generations.

**Now you would take Benjamin:** (v36) sadly Jacob's sons had done many wicked things throughout their years and therefore Jacob could not fully trust them, had he not been suspicious of their motives, perhaps he might have been more willing to allow them to return to Egypt with Benjamin. But when a person does not have full trust, every emotion within them will move toward doing whatever is in their power to do to protect those they love.

## **Reuben tells Jacob to Kill His Two Sons if He does not bring Benjamin Back.**

Genesis 42:37-38 ----- <sup>37</sup>Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." <sup>38</sup>But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

To take Reuben's statement, "Slay my two sons," (37) (or rather two of his sons since he had four) (Gen. 46:9) literally is senseless as no parent would literally give his children's grandfather permission to kill his children and no grandfather would literally kill his grandchildren. Reuben is speaking in this way for the following four reasons: -

1. He was fully aware of the serious ramifications of going without Benjamin. He believed that if they did not return with Benjamin, Simeon would be put to death and the fierce harsh Egyptian governor of the land would most likely send his armies against Jacob's small Hebrew family.

2. After his many conversations with the Egyptian governor he trusted he would be true to his word and that no harm would come to them or to Benjamin
3. He was fully aware they would need to return to buy more corn and grain if they were all going to survive the widespread famine.
4. To offer his father a strong assurance and that Benjamin would be in no danger and to show him that he was so confident of this that he was willing to stake the lives of two of his children and most likely all that he had upon Benjamin's safe return.

It is for these reasons that Reuben says, "Slay my two sons," he is using the most extreme language to convey to his father the seriousness and terrible ramification of not returning to Egypt with Benjamin. There are times when the reader of the Bible has to use some common sense, consider the following: -

- What value would it be to Jacob to lose his loved son Benjamin and then have two of his loved grandchildren slain.
- Should such a thing actually be carried out it would be a great abomination before God.
- Killing two grandchildren would greatly increase Jacobs sorrow and grief, instead of lessening it.

Reuben says this to show that he would be as careful for the return of Benjamin as if the life of two sons depended upon his safety and to show that he was so confident of Benjamin's safety that he could risk the life of those who were as dear to him as Benjamin was to Jacob and not that two of his children and Jacobs grandchildren should be literally killed. It is an exaggerated expression to show that he will be fully responsible for him, do all he can to protect him and will bring him safely back.

**Jacob tells Reuben he will bring him down to Sheol with grey hairs: (38)**  
Sheol is the Hebrew word for grave. Jacob is expressing the great sorrow and grief he would feel if Reuben took Benjamin to Egypt and did not return with him.

By this time, it is likely Jacob had lost Leah as well as Rachel and we know that the (believed) loss of Joseph Rachel's firstborn son had deeply wounded him and now with Benjamin being the only remaining son of Rachel he emotionally clung to him.

Based upon Judah's words to Joseph in chapter forty-four the brothers not only appear to have had no jealousy against Benjamin as they did against Joseph but also seem to have a big brother attitude of protective warmth toward him and share in their father's feelings (Gen. 44:18-34).

The expression, "You shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol" carries the idea that should they not return from Egypt with Benjamin he would have no more days of comfort and joy in this world, but would continue his life to the grave in sorrow and grief.