

# OpenTheo

## Genesis 40 - 42



### Genesis - Steve Gregg

In Genesis 40-42, the story of Joseph continues to reveal God's providence and Joseph's integrity. Joseph's imprisonment leads to him being trusted by the head of the prison and put in charge of the other prisoners, and his ability to interpret dreams leads to his eventual release from prison and appointment as governor over all of Egypt. In the midst of famine, Joseph's family travels to Egypt to buy grain and Joseph tests his brothers by asking them to bring their youngest brother Benjamin to him to verify their honesty. Overall, the story illustrates how God works through trials and difficult circumstances to ultimately bring about good.

### Transcript

Alright, I believe we're now entering the story of Joseph again at chapter 40 of Genesis, and Joseph has demonstrated his integrity in the house of Potiphar, where he was a slave, not only his integrity in terms of financial management and his competence to but also his integrity, his refusal to succumb to the seduction of Potiphar's wife. And this angered her and she falsely accused him so he was put into prison. And as I said, the reason he was put into prison is because Potiphar could not possibly have believed her story.

And he had to be put in prison because he couldn't ignore his wife's charges. That would be a supreme insult to her. On the other hand, he didn't believe them either or else he would have killed Joseph.

Any slave that would attack his master's wife would certainly be summarily dispatched with the sword. And Joseph was not only spared the sword and put in prison, but he's actually put into a prison where he had the chance of advancement. Not that the highest position of a prisoner in those days would really necessarily be a very comfortable position, but at least he was not treated as if he was really a criminal.

I mean, he was and that he was in prison, but he was treated as if he might be a trustworthy fellow and one whom the head of the prison could even put in charge of things. And that's what we find. And the end of chapter 39, the Lord was with Joseph.

This is why he's in prison. In verse 21 of chapter 39 and showed mercy and he gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison, just as he had given him favor with Potiphar. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison, whatever they did there, it was his doing.

So he must have he must have arranged their work duties and their meal times and their everything they were doing. He was given the charge over it, though he was a prisoner himself. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's hand because Yahweh was with him and whatever he did.

Yahweh made to prosper. Now, chapter 40, it came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their Lord, the king of Egypt, and Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined and the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them so that they were in the custody for a while.

Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt who were confined in the prison dreamed a dream. Both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with his own interpretation. And Joseph came into them in the morning and looked at them and saw that they were sad.

So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his Lord's house saying, Why do you look so sad today? And they said, We each have a dream. We have each dreamed a dream. And there is no interpreter of it.

And Joseph said to them, Do not interpretations belong to God. Please tell them to me. Then the chief butler told his dreams of Joseph and he said to him, Behold, in my dream, a vine was before a vine was before me.

And in the vine were three branches. It was as though it budded its blossoms shot forth and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph said to him, This is the interpretation of it. The three branches are three days. Now, within three days, Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place.

And you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, according to the former manner when you were his butler. But remember me when it is well with you and please show kindness to me. Make mention to me of Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

For indeed, I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews. And also, I've done nothing here that they should put me into this dungeon. Now, when the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, I also was in my dream and there I had three

white baskets on my head in the uppermost basket.

There were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head. So Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation of it. The three baskets are three days.

Within three days, Pharaoh will lift off your head. Actually, it should be lift up your head. The New King James changed it to make to give the sense of it.

But it's the same phrase that is in verse thirteen. He will lift up your head, but it has a different meaning here. He will lift up your head from you and hang on a tree and the birds will eat your flesh from you.

Now, it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. But he hangs the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him. However, this didn't. It was not a wasted episode.

Because we know that the butler eventually remembered him again, and that changed everything. And so we can see that these two men ended up in that prison by the providence of God. Joseph could easily have been just forgotten there forever and never have been brought to the attention of Pharaoh.

But in order that he would be eventually brought to the attention of Pharaoh, God ordained it that these two men would be arrested and put in prison and would be put on Joseph's charge and would have dreams while they were there. And that Joseph would be able to commend himself to them by interpreting their dreams. And that would prepare for the butler to realize when Pharaoh had a dream that Joseph could interpret it.

I mean, all of this was a setup from God, as we know, because it was God's prophecy to Joseph earlier in his life that his brothers would bow down to him. God knew how that was going to happen. It was going to happen through Joseph being elevated in Egypt at a time of famine when his brothers would have to come in and do obeisance to him.

And so God knew all of this at the very beginning of Joseph's career before before he was ever sold into slavery. God knew that Joseph was going to be raised up into Pharaoh's house. But you know what? He probably could never have gotten raised up there from Potiphar's house.

He might have, of course, if he'd interpret some dream for Potiphar and Potiphar was in a position to hear that Pharaoh had a dream they wanted. Maybe something would have

happened, but the butler was much more in a position to hear Pharaoh's concerns about the dream, because he was with Pharaoh every day. Potiphar probably was not.

Potiphar might never have learned of Pharaoh's dream. So in a sense, Joseph stepped down into prison was the first step back up. He was eventually going to go higher than any other person in Egypt other than Pharaoh himself.

He was going to be exalted that high, but he couldn't get there from Potiphar's house. He had to get there from prison because there he would meet the butler. And it's the butler who did it.

As in all mysteries, the butler actually hadn't done anything wrong. In this case, he was innocent. It was the baker who had done it.

Done what? Well, according to Jewish tradition, and I think it's a fair inference that they have got it right. These two men were arrested because Pharaoh's birthday was coming up. We know that because his birthday was three days after this and and you know, it specifically mentions it was his birthday.

It doesn't have to mention that, but it was Pharaoh's birthday coming up. And apparently in the preparations for the special meals and so forth that were going to be assigned for that birthday party, the butler and the baker had both come under suspicion for some reason. Perhaps some cache of some poisonous thing was found in the kitchen and it was clear there's some plot to do the Pharaoh in at his birthday and therefore, it was not known whether the butler or the baker was guilty.

So they're both put in prison until it could be investigated. The baker was found to be the guilty party and so he's hanged. The butler found innocent, so he's restored his post.

The butler was the wine taster for Pharaoh. Kings usually, you know, there were always people who wanted to kill kings, even their sons and other people wanted to take their thrones from them. So poisoning was something they always had to guard against.

And therefore, they usually would not just drink the wine is brought directly from the kitchen. They would have the butler actually the wine taster taste the wine in their presence. And if he didn't gag and fall over and die, then it was considered safe for the Pharaoh to drink.

That's what Nehemiah did in the in the court of Artaxerxes in Persia. Nehemiah was the cupbearer for the king and this man was the cupbearer. The butler for the king.

And so he was the wine taster. It might be obvious that the wine taster would not wish to poison Pharaoh, at least not through the wine. Since it would mean his own life as well, since he had to taste it, but it wasn't clear.

You know, I'm reading between the lines here. This is basically the way the rabbis have figured out the story behind the story. But it makes sense.

It makes sense of everything that there were both these men were under suspicion. They're both kitchen help, not kitchen help. They're both in charge.

One's in charge of the wine, one's in charge of the bread. And, you know, one of them had apparently been involved in a plot to do Pharaoh in. And since they're both involved with food services, probably it was a poison issue.

But they were put in prison while the matter could be searched out in that time in the providence of God. They each dreamed a dream. And Joseph comes in in the morning.

Why are you so sad today? Isn't that funny? They're in a dungeon. He says, Why are you sad? What are you supposed to be when you're in a dungeon? Joseph must have been, you know, kind of unusually cheerful for a prisoner in a third world prison. You know, but he says, Why do you look so sad today? And they said, What do you think? No, they didn't say, What do you think? They said, We've had dreams and we can't interpret these dreams.

Now, Joseph had, as far as we know, Joseph had no experience in interpreting dreams, although his brothers and his dad had interpreted his dreams and had not liked the interpretations. So he had at least he was familiar with the idea that a dream might mean something, might have an interpretation. But Joseph said, Well, the interpretation of dreams, that's God's province.

You know, God, God can do that. So tell me what they are. It's interesting how those two things he says do not interpretations belong to God.

Tell them to me. Like, I mean, by implication, I'm in touch with God. If God wants you to know the interpretation, he can tell me what it is.

And sure enough, he did. Now, the dreams had things, features in them that are related to what these men did for a living. The baker and the butler each had dreams related to their tasks.

The butler spoke first and he'd seen three branches on a vine. Vines are, of course, where wine comes from. And so he gathered clusters, he crushed them in the cup and he gave it to Pharaoh again.

So we see that, you know, he's back at his post. The only thing really hard to interpret about this is that the three branches represent three days. And by the way, that's the most impressive feature of it, because anyone might have guessed it's a 50 50 chance this guy will be restored.

But to give the time frame for the fulfillment is unusual, even for prophets in the Old Testament. They very seldom give the actual time frame of when this is going to happen. But Joseph knew from the three branches that that represented three days and that was going to be the time of fulfillment.

And of course, after he gives that and he realizes that this butler is going to be back in the presence of Pharaoh, he realized that he, Joseph, is now going to have a friend in court. I mean, a butler is not exactly the kind of servant of the Pharaoh who really can persuade Pharaoh to do what he wants to do. That is to say, he's not he's not somebody that listens to for strategic counsel about what to do about his prisoners and things like that.

But nonetheless, he was the best shot that Joseph had. The only guy he knew that he had really had conversation with who might be indebted to him for this interpretation and who Joseph knew was going to be regularly in the presence of Pharaoh. So he made his appeal and said, listen, when you're back with Pharaoh, please tell him about me.

I haven't done anything to be put in prison. I'm innocent and I don't even belong in this country. I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews.

If I could just go home, that'd be really nice. So it's a long shot. But I mean, Joseph, who did have some prophetic insight, might well have seen it just in the circumstance, the providence of God.

And, hey, this is this may be my ticket. This guy, he's going back to Pharaoh. Who who could let me out of prison other than Pharaoh? And so he makes a makes his request at it.

Of course, it's two years after this before anything comes of it. So Joseph's faith is tested even two more years. By the way, a year in a third world jail is probably difficult.

Two years, twice as difficult. But the baker then saw that the interpretation was a good one and that well, maybe I'll get a good interpretation, too. So he told his dream.

There's three baskets of bread on his head, which were no doubt for Pharaoh and the birds of the air came in and ate the bread off his head. It was unprotected. He's responsible for this bread.

He shouldn't be letting the birds get at it. It's the royal bread. There's obviously some negligence on his part here and.

And therefore, it's a negative thing, the butler squeezing grapes into a glass and give it to Pharaoh. That's a positive thing. That's his regular job.

That's what he wants to do. The baker, however, is kind of falling down on his duty here

and letting the birds get at the royal bread. And Joseph said, well, those baskets are three days and those birds are going to be picking at your flesh.

And we find it. It fell out exactly the way Joseph said it would. And so the baker is hanged and the butler is restored.

But immediately forgot about Joseph. Chapter 41. Then it came to pass at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream and behold, he stood by the river.

Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking in fact, and they fed in the meadow and behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt and stood by the other cows on the bank of the river. And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh woke.

That would be disturbing. I mean, cows don't eat each other. Cows don't eat meat.

And he's got these scary looking gaunt skeletal cows come out and they're like carnivores and they eat up these fat cows. Weird dream. He wakes up disturbed, but managed to get back to sleep only to be disturbed by another dream.

He slept and dreamed a second time and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stock, plump and good. And behold, seven thin heads blighted by the east wind sprang up after them and the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh woke and indeed it was a dream.

Now 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 its wise men and Pharaoh told them his dreams. But there was no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh. Remember, I said we were talking about dreams before that.

Certainly not all dreams are prophetic. Not all dreams are from God. Not all dreams have a message.

But on the occasions in the Bible, when people do have dreams are from God, it seems like they know it when they wake up, their spirit is disturbed. I mentioned that there's been a very few times that I've had dreams that have turned out to be truly from God. And in each of those case, I woke up really disturbed and really affected, really aware that there was something more than ordinarily true about those dreams.

And so we see Pharaoh that way to now. Nebuchadnezzar had a similar experience in Daniel chapter two. He had dreamed something and he but he either forgot what the dream was or pretended to forget.

He asked his wise men to tell him not only the interpretation, but to tell what the dream itself was from from with no clues. And they were unable to do that. I'm surprised,

however, that Pharaoh's wise men here couldn't interpret the dream once told to them, at least give some kind of interpretation, whether it's fake or otherwise.

I mean, these guys, this is what they did for a living. You can almost get it right. Just guessing.

It's about cows and grain food, right? And there's fat ones and then they're consumed by skinny ones. I mean, an imaginative wise man and Pharaoh might have easily picked up on this. You know, there's the fat cows, fat grain that speaks of abundant food, skinny cows, blighted grain that seems to speak of famine.

Now, what might not be possible for them to get is the number of years. And again, this is where Joseph was able to shine, because he again in these, in these dreams, what he came up with that others maybe couldn't, is that these seven ears and these seven cows that represent seven years and therefore a time element is revealed. But it would seem that these wise men.

I mean, if they did this kind of thing for a living, I mean, I'm sure they were fakes. I'm sure they didn't really have any revelation from God about these things, but they had learned to be good. They were able to convince the Pharaoh most of the time that they knew what is about.

And so it wouldn't take an awful lot of imagination for them to come up with something here, but maybe even God himself just blinded them. So that Joseph would get his staff at it and they could not interpret them to Pharaoh. Verse nine, then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh saying, I remember my fault this day when Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker.

We each dreamed a dream in one night. He and I, each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now there was a young Hebrew man with us.

There a servant of the captain of the guard and we told him and he interpreted our dreams for us to each man. He interpreted according to his own dream and it came to pass just as he interpreted for us. So it happened.

He restored me to my office and he hanged him. He mentioned that Joseph was a Hebrew man, a servant of the captain of the guard. He doesn't actually mention he's a prisoner, a political prisoner, a criminal, a convicted criminal.

Instead he refers to him as a, you know, a servant of the jailkeeper. So he doesn't bring up the fact that Joseph is there on the status of a criminal, but rather leaves it open that he might just be an employee of the prison. Anyway, then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon and he shaved, changed his clothing and came to Pharaoh.



This bit of shaving is just a little bit of authenticity here. Of course, Joseph had not been shaving in prison. For one thing, Hebrews don't shave even when they're out of prison.

It's the Hebrew custom to wear beards, but not the Egyptian custom. The Egyptians shave their heads and their beards. And so this is mentioned just in passing.

It could have been left out, but it's obviously an authentic bit of the preparation he'd have to go to come before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have dreamed a dream and there's no one who can interpret it, but I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream and interpret it. So Joseph answered Pharaoh saying, it is not in me.

God will give Pharaoh the answer of peace. Now, again, Joseph is making sure that he gives God the credit and he could have done. He could have given the interpretation without verbalizing that.

I mean, in his own heart, he could say, well, God, I'm counting on you to give me the interpretation. But he made sure that Pharaoh knew that it's not himself. In that sense, he, in a sense, almost removes himself, himself one step from any credit for this, which means removing himself one step from any gratitude Pharaoh might have to him.

I mean, he's basically saying, if you get what you want, you should thank God for that. Not me. And yet Joseph's freedom is going to depend on Pharaoh having gratitude toward Joseph himself.

But Joseph's not looking out for his own interest, really here. He's making sure that God gets the credit for it. And he said, it's not me.

God will give Pharaoh the answer of peace. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, behold, in my dream, I stood on the bank of the river, the Nile. Suddenly, seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat, and they fed in the meadow.

Then, behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I've never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they'd eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning.

So I awoke. Also, I saw in my dream and suddenly seven heads came up on one stock, full and good. And behold, seven heads withered thin and blighted by the east wind sprang up after them.

And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magician. But there was no one who could explain it to me.

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, the dreams of Pharaoh are one. And God has shown

Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years.

The seven good heads are seven years. The dreams are one. There's just one meaning for both of them.

And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after him are seven years. And the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh.

God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Indeed, seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt. But after them, seven years of famine will arise and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt and the famine will deplete the land.

So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God. Now, God had not yet stated this principle, but in Deuteronomy twice.

It says in the mouth of two or more witnesses, every word will be established. And actually, that verse in Deuteronomy is quoted or alluded to five times in the New Testament. So apparently a very important principle.

Something is not to be considered established as true unless there's at least more than one witness of it. And so Joseph apparently knew that principle before it was ever given in the law. I said, God gave you two witnesses about this.

So, you know, it's established by God because certain. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. Notice, I wonder how much Joseph at this point was beginning to, you know, press his options here, find a discerning and wise man like these Egyptian magicians.

Well, no, they couldn't interpret a dream. I guess they're not that wise. Maybe you can find someone wise enough, though, you know, there could be a wise and discernment somewhere in the land.

Find someone like that and send him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this and let him appoint officers over the land to collect one fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years and let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh and let them keep food in their cities. Then the food shall be as reserved for the land in the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land and Egypt land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.

Now, actually, we don't know. No one knows the exact time of these events. Their

approximate time.

Well, I should say their time can be the years this happened, can be figured out from the chronology of the Bible, but no one knows exactly who the Pharaoh was at this time. There's more than one possibility. And as far as establishing that there was a seven year famine after seven years of plenty at that particular time from any secular records, it's asking too much for us to try to have that kind of information detailed for us in the secular records.

But we do know from archaeology that Egypt was subject to seasons of famine as well as seasons of plenty. Usually, though, seasons of famine were were not as severe in Egypt as in other places. And that's why Abraham went down to Egypt during the time of famine and Isaac considered it.

But God told him not to go down there. But people typically went to Egypt at times of famine, because even though the rain didn't exist, the night was still there. The Nile still had water in it and they could irrigate and therefore grow crops during that time.

But when a famine would even come to Egypt, it was a really it was really a severe situation. And there have been some and there have been storage cities uncovered in the from earlier strata of Egypt's history where they actually had cities with just huge storage buildings for grain and stuff like that. And those might have been built at Joseph's recommendation, because he said they should store up the grain in the city.

So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants and Pharaoh said to his servants, can we find such a one is this man in whom is the spirit of God. Now it says spirit of God in the New King James word. God is Elohim and therefore some translations of the spirit of the gods.

And of course, it's entirely possible that that's what Pharaoh said. The Egyptians were generally polytheistic, and so he might not have been speaking about the true God here so much as just the spirit of the gods is with this man. Now there was one Pharaoh who is notably monotheistic, Akhenaten, but it's not generally believed that he was the pharaoh at this time.

So this is probably a polytheistic pharaoh and would have said this man has the spirit of the gods in him, the Elohim. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph in as much as Elohim has shown you all this. There is no one is discerning and wise as you.

You should be over my house and all my people shall be ruled according to your word only in regard to the throne. Will I be greater than you? And Pharaoh said to Joseph, see, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put on Joseph's hand, which simply meant that Joseph would now be able to transact official business in the name of Pharaoh because he'd have his signet.

And he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot, which he had, and they cried out before him, bow the knee. So he sent him over all the land of Egypt.

What a sudden reversal that is. He has spent at this point 13 years in Egypt as a servant of Pharaoh. Potiphar and as a prisoner.

We don't know how long he was in Potiphar's house before he's a prisoner. But between those two venues, he had been 13 years because he was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery. And we will find that he was 30 years old on this occasion when he came out of the prison.

So there were 13 years of waiting for God when he had the dreams from God that his brothers would someday bow to him. Obviously, I dreamed that he would be in a position of authority at some time. And yet, as a slave with no option of being bought out of slavery and then worse as a prisoner thrown away for life imprisonment.

And they threw away the key. And, you know, he's out of sight, certainly out of mind. How could there ever be any fulfillment of those dreams that God had given him? Now, we're not told whether Joseph during those years lost faith or not.

I mean, he didn't lose his faith in God. Whether he began to question whether those dreams that he'd had were from God, I don't know. But it seems like he's fairly confident in spite of all those things.

This man was a man of unusual faith, it would appear, because his faith may have been renewed when the butler and the baker had their dreams. You know, maybe that he had lost confidence until then. But then he saw this is God's provision here.

This is my ticket out of here. If he did, he was right. And he probably did sort of see that possibility at least.

But it's an amazing thing how, you know, it'd be amazing enough if a slave became the grand vizier of Egypt, which is what he became second in command under the pharaoh, like a prime minister. But he wasn't a slave. He was a prisoner, a political prisoner.

And he's elevated from that dungeon into the place of the second chariot, where people are commanded with runners ahead of him as he goes down the street, telling people to bow the knee to him. That's just an amazing turnaround. So Pharaoh also said to Joseph.

I am Pharaoh, and without your consent, no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. Just a figure of speech. Nobody can do anything of significance without Joseph's permission.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zathnath-Paneah. And there's been many suggestions

as to what it means. The most popular suggestion is that it means God speaks and he lives.

But some think it means something like interpreter dreams or something like that to the Egyptian. Ancient Egyptian is not that well known yet. Ancient Egyptian really was not understood by Western people at all until the finding of the Rosetta Stone by Napoleon, actually, in Egypt.

But that was still in very modern history. And then it took a long time for them to learn how to decipher the hieroglyphic. But of course, scholars are learning a lot more about the language all the time.

But they're still not really certain. There's not full agreement as to what Zathnath-Paneah means. And Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife, Athanath, the daughter of Potipharah, priest of Om.

So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. So he married the daughter of a clergyman in the pagan temple. But we don't read anything about her being a problem to him in that respect.

Joseph was 30 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. Now, in the seven plentiful years, the ground brought forth abundantly.

So he gathered up all the food of seven years which were in the land of Egypt and laid up the food in the cities. He laid it up in every city, the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain as the sand of the sea until he stopped counting for it was without number.

So this is this passes over the seven years of plenty with just the summary statement that he gathered up. We know he gathered up 20 percent of the national product for to store up. Now, it's probable that the Egyptians were already giving something like 10 percent for the maintenance of Pharaoh and his government.

That was a fairly typical taxation in those days to support the king and his administration. So I don't know if they just added another 10 percent on in order to put that aside for the famine or if they added 20 percent more on to the 10. But they it was pretty steep taxation, not as steep as what we pay, but still pretty steep.

In America, I think middle class people probably pay what about 40 percent or something like that close to it. So even now, the Egyptians with these extreme measures of taxation still were probably not as heavily taxed as we are becoming accustomed to be. Joseph called the name of the firstborn, which means forgetting for God has made me to forget all my toil and all of my father's house.

In other words, I used to long to go home to my father's house, but I kind of that's kind of slipped my mind lately. I better hear like it here better than my father's house. Certainly in his position of power, he could, if he had wished, have sent a servant back to his father to say, Dad, I'm OK.

Come on over and see me. But he didn't do that. He could have even no doubt gotten some vacation time and gone down to see his family himself.

But he had forgotten. He hadn't forgotten in the sense that he didn't remember at all. But his longing for his father's house had pretty much disappeared.

That doesn't mean he'd lost his affection for his father. But I think that Joseph spent those seven years contemplating how he is going to engineer the restoration of himself and his family. And I believe that when his brothers finally showed up, that everything he did with them had been well thought out.

I don't think he was just playing it by ear in alternately peevish and alternately friendly and so forth as the mood hit him. I believe that Joseph had seven years. He was a smart guy.

He knew his brothers were going to come and bow down to him someday because he'd got to give him prophetic dreams about that. I think he had given a lot of thought. And who wouldn't? Anyone would.

When this happens, when I see my brothers again, how am I going to react? What am I going to do for them or to them? Oh, what is it I want to accomplish when I finally see them? And I believe he spent those seven years, although he'd forgotten all his father's house, that just means he'd lost his longing to go back there, which had been probably very dominant while he was in prison and a slave. But I don't think he forgot about his father or forgot that his brothers were there or that they were going to be coming. And I think he gave that some thought.

But his son Manasseh was that name because it means forgetting. And then he had another son, a second one, and he named him Ephraim, for God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. Ephraim means twice fruitful or double fruitful and he had become fruitful.

Then the seven years of plenty, which were in the land of Egypt, ended and the seven years of famine began to come. As Joseph had said, the famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread, not because there wasn't famine there, but because they had stored it up. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.

Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, go to Joseph, whatever he says to you, do it. So Joseph's been in power for seven years and Pharaoh still has complete confidence in

Joseph. And why not? Joseph has seen the coming seven years of plenty correctly and he's now made provision.

Egypt is rich enough to support itself and the surrounding lands that would come and buy grain. He ought to be happy with Joseph. And Joseph does Pharaoh a lot more good than this as time goes by.

The famine was over all the face of the earth and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians and the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because of the famine that was severe in all land. So, first of all, we read of the Egyptians coming to their king and they are sent to Joseph.

So they begin to buy back their own grain that they have been storing up over the years. They've been giving it in rather excessive taxation and now they're buying it back from Pharaoh. So he's getting rich off them again and then he's going to get money from other countries.

Because other countries are going to need his grain as well. So he's going to become the international breadbasket here. And the only thing that's really important about that for us, for our story, is how that affected Joseph's family, which becomes the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 42. When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, why do you look at one another? They look at each other hungrily. Don't look at each other that way.

There's food in Egypt. Go get real food. And he said, indeed, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt.

Go down to the place and buy for us there that we may live and not die. So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother, Benjamin, with his brothers, for he said, lest some calamity befall him.

Benjamin, by the way, would not be a little boy at this time. He had to be at least a teenager, possibly close to 20 years old. Joseph had been gone for 13 years.

And, you know, I'm not sure how old Benjamin was at the time that Joseph was sent into slavery. But even if Benjamin had only been five years old at the time or so, he'd be close to 20 at this time. But still, the apple of his father's eye, the last surviving son of his deceased favorite wife.

And so he's not taking any chances with Benjamin, he thinks. And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed for the famine was in the land of Canaan. Now, Joseph was governor over all over the land, and it was he who sold to all the people of

the land.

And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Now, Joseph's an important man. Would he really be handling every little transaction of grain with thousands of people coming to buy? Wouldn't he have subordinates handling the transaction? I think he probably would.

But since Joseph is the one selling it, I think he's the one responsible for overseeing the operation of selling the grain to people. But he knew his brothers would be coming. I'm just going to guess that either he was providentially on the site when his brothers came up and approached one of the merchants, one of the Egyptian merchants, and Joseph recognized him and said, I'll handle this transaction.

Or he may have even had his own servants on the lookout for them, knowing they were going to have to come. They're going to be here someday. They're going to be hungry.

They'll be showing up. And when these men show up from Canaan, let me know about it because I want to deal with them myself. In any case, however, it happened, Joseph found himself dealing directly with his brothers.

And it says Joseph's brothers came about down before him with their faces to the ground. Verse six. So there's a fulfillment of his dream.

Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said, Where do you come from? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. Now, it might seem strange.

They wouldn't recognize their brother, though he recognized them. But he had changed much more than they had. For one thing, he was younger when they last seen him.

He was still a teenager. Now he is close to 40 years old. He had been 30 when he was elevated to power.

Then there were seven years of plenty. And now there's probably been close part of another year. He's probably 38 years old or so.

Getting close to 40. He's more than twice the age. That he was when they last saw him.

Plus, he's shaved, which, you know, Hebrews, that's uncommon. He may have had a little kind of rectangular little beard coming out the chin like Egyptian officials sometimes did. But he was he had bare cheeks.

He'd been he was speaking Egyptian. For one thing, we read this later. He was speaking through a translator, so they didn't know he spoke their language and he could hear what they were saying and understand them.



But they didn't know it because he was using a translator and he was dressed in all this Egyptian garb. And he was the last person they expected to run into. I mean, his voice could have changed.

In the meantime, his language was different. He was more than twice the age they'd last seen him. They assumed Joseph was dead, so they weren't expecting this to be him.

And they just didn't put it together. But of course, they still looked about the same. They were older, but they still had the same beards and style of dress and voices and language and so forth.

It wasn't hard to recognize them. But he was very different looking and he was expecting them. They were not expecting to see him.

So that has a lot to do with it, too. And so he could play with them a little bit. He spoke roughly to them.

Then he said to them, where do you come from? And they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph recognized his brothers and they did not recognize him. Verse nine.

Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them and said to them, you are spies. You have come to see the nakedness of the land. And they said to him, no, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.

We are all one man's sons. We are all honest men. That was a bit of an exaggeration, but part of that was true.

Your servants are not spies. But he said to them, no, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land and nakedness of the land is just a Hebraism that means the vulnerability looking for the weak spots of Egypt, like they represent some hostile government looking for the chinks in Egypt's armor. That's what he's accusing them of.

And they said, your servants are twelve brothers, sons of one man in the land of Canaan. In fact, the youngest is with our father today and one is no more, meaning Joseph. But Joseph said to them, it is as I spoke to you, saying you are spies in this manner.

You should be tested. And this is the point here. All that Joseph did from this point on with them was that they were being tested.

As he said, they didn't understand the nature of the test. And we don't even understand until it reaches its climax. But that he had this test already arranged for them.

And it began this way. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you and let him bring your brother.

And you shall all be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you or else by the life of Pharaoh. Surely you are a spy. So he put them all together in prison for three days just to let them worry a little bit.

He wasn't going to keep them there, but that they went to prison for three days. I mean, what he had said is you're going to stay here until your brother comes back. I'm going to send one of you guys back to your brother and the rest of you will rot here until he comes back.

Well, they knew that their dad wouldn't send Benjamin back. So as far as they knew that this prison was the rest of their life. But he just he just gave him a little scared.

And then Joseph said to them the third day, do this and live for I fear God. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house. But you go and carry grain for the famine to your houses.

So he reversed it. All of you stay in prison and one goes, we'll keep one of you in prison and the others go. And he says, also, bring your youngest brother to me so your words will be verified and you shall not die.

And they did so. Then they said to one another, not knowing that he could understand them as they spoke in his presence. We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us and we would not hear.

Therefore, this distress has come upon us. Notice. This has been 20 years and they're still carrying around such guilt about Joseph that it's the first thing that comes to mind when something goes wrong.

I mean, something's gone wrong. It's because of what we did to Joseph. You know, I mean, it is indeed.

And one might expect him to think that if this happens, say, the next year or sometime after that. But 20 years have passed and it's still the prominent thing on their conscience. We did this thing to Joseph.

We ignored the agony of his soul when he pleaded with us and we had no mercy on him. And that's why this is happening. It's like, you know, when you've got some unresolved guilt, it doesn't really go away even after decades.

And you can tell that it's that way when first time something goes wrong, you think, God's punishing me. You know, God punished me for what I did back there. And that's happening.

It's time for you to repent and get clean and get rid of that guilt that they have not come clean yet. And Reuben answered them saying, did I not speak to you saying, do not sin

against the boy and you would not listen. Therefore, his blood is now required of us.

But they did not know that Joseph understood them, for he spoke to them through an interpreter and he himself turned away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

Now, you know, Joseph, this is a very poignant thing for him because he's seen his brothers for the first time and he realizes that they're still feeling guilty about what they did to him. And that moves him. And he hears Reuben, maybe for the first time, he may not have heard this before, but Reuben had tried to deliver him, Reuben, the oldest son.

That might be why Simeon was put in charge, to be in jail. Maybe he would have put Reuben, the oldest, in jail, but it's possible that he heard for the first time that Reuben, unlike the others, had sought to deliver him and they hadn't listened to him. So maybe pick the next oldest, Simeon, to punish and put in jail.

And he bound him before their eyes. The fact they did it before their eyes is important, too. He's trying to make an impact on them.

He didn't just drag off Simeon and have him thrown in jail without their seeing it. He wanted them to see this whole thing. He wanted them to see the inside of a jail for three days.

He wanted them to see their brother get bound and dragged off to prison. This was supposed to make a profound impression on them. I'm sure it did.

Verse 25, Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain to restore every man's money to his sack. Now he commanded his servants, he didn't let the brothers know that he's doing this, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. But as one of them opened his sack and gave his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money and there it was in the mouth of his sack. So he said to his brothers, my money has been restored and there it is in my sack.

Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, what is this that God has done to us? It looked like a bad omen to them. You know, I think it's a good thing. Hey, I got grain and money, too.

We came out ahead on this deal. But they realized that this doesn't generally just happen. Either somebody is setting them up, you know, framing them so they can be accused of something later.

And they had reason to think that might be so, because for no reason at all, this Egyptian guy had accused them of being spies. They didn't have anything about them that particularly looked more like spies than other men. Why would they be picked on? And he was treating them roughly for no reason.

They had been respectful all along. So, I mean, in their minds, this guy's just chosen to pick on them. And this is probably part of that.

The money's back in the sack so we can be accused of stealing it. And so they were afraid. Then they went to Jacob, their father in the land of Canaan, and told him all that had happened to them, saying the man who is the Lord of the land spoke roughly to us and took us for spies of the country.

But we said to him, we are honest men. We're not spies. We're twelve brothers, sons of our father.

One is no more. And the youngest is with our father this day in the land of Canaan. Then the man, the Lord of the country, said to us by this, I will know that you are honest men.

Leave one of your brothers here with me. Take food for the famine to your households and be gone and bring your youngest brother to me. So I shall know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men.

And I will deliver your brother to you and you may trade in the land. Then it happened as they emptied their sacks that surprisingly, each man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

How are we going to explain this? And Jacob, their father, said to them, you have bereaved me of my children. Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more.

And you want to take Benjamin away? All these things are against me. Now, when he says you have bereaved me of my children, he mentions Joseph. It sounds like he might even suspect by this time that they had done something to Joseph.

Of course, they've never owned up to it. They're going to have to before this is over. Imagine.

I mean, when on that startling occasion, when Joseph says, I'm Joseph, your brother. I mean, the stunned response to that thing, is he going to hurt us or not? And then to find out, oh, I'm your brother. I forgive you.

And they said, oh, good. That's wonderful. Oh, now we've got to go tell Dad.

Joseph's alive. That means we're going to tell Dad that we lied to him, that we sold Joseph into slavery, that we deceived him, that we watched him grieve and we let him grieve without telling him the truth. This is not going to be really the most pleasant thing

for them.

And they still haven't come clean at this point. They're still deceiving their father. Then he may not be all that deceived.

He's a bit of a deceiver himself, or has at least he's been in the past. And, you know, sometimes a con artist can spot a con artist better than an honest person can. It looks like he might already have it in his suspicion that they have not been straight with him about Joseph.

He says, you have bereaved me of my children. Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more.

And now you want to take Benjamin? He says, everything is working against me. And that's what it seems like at times. One thing piles up after another thing, like Job.

One thing happens and before he finishes hearing that story, another report comes of bad news. And just about the time that news is finished being spoken, another guy comes about it. It's just one thing after another heaps up.

But Jacob had this to learn and he would learn it soon. And that was that what looked like everything against him was everything being conspired together for his good, ultimately. He was going to learn he's not going to lose Benjamin.

He's not even going to lose Simeon. And he's going to regain Joseph and he's not going to suffer from a famine. He's going to get the best of the land.

Everything's really going to be good. But it all seems bad just before it turns good. Just like with Joseph, before he could rise to the throne, he had to be in prison.

It had to get really bad before it could get better. When Moses was sent to the Israelites when they were in slavery in Egypt and God said, I'm going to deliver them. He starts confronting Pharaoh and so forth.

And the Pharaoh makes it worse for the Israelites, not better. It was going to get better, but it got worse first. A lot of times that's just how God deals.

You might even be suspicious when things look like they're getting worse than can be easily explained. When the trials are piling up, you always say, oh, I get it. You know, before the arrow can be shot, it has to be pulled backward to create the tension to propel it forward.

God's just drawing the bow here. Things are getting worse, but that's because he's about ready to propel things forward into something that's better. Maybe something I can't imagine, something very different than what I wanted.

Maybe the things that I wanted are not really good and God's taking those from me. But

it seems to me that everything is against me, that nothing could go right. But God is very ingenious and we really cannot second guess him.

And so many times the scripture points it out that Jesus is dead and the disciples are hopeless and then the best news of their lives comes up. It changes everything about his resurrection and so forth. Those kind of things are commonplace in the Bible and in God's dealings in his people's lives.

Then Reuben spoke to his father saying, 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. Jacob didn't buy that.

I mean, what incentive could there be for Jacob to accept that offer? Okay, you take Benjamin. If Benjamin doesn't come back, I'll kill my two grandsons. That'll make me feel better.

Yeah, that'll be really a good idea. Now, that's kind of stupid suggestion. These guys are kind of desperately thinking, you know, grasping at straws.

But Jacob said, my son shall not go down with you for his brother is dead and he is left alone. That is of Rachel. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.

And so, the story is interrupted by our break, but we will come back to it and see what happens. I know it's going to surprise you.