



# JOSEPH

## The Dreamer Comes

Issue #52 Summer 2021

### **Favorite Son**

Kelly Johnson

Genesis 37:1-24. Joseph, son of Jacob, led a life full of events outside his control. His mother was Rachel and Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob. This special place in Jacob's heart had consequences over which Joseph had no control. Joseph's father's high regard for him caused negative events, but God was able to use these negative events to move His plan forward. Jacob's uneven love for his children caused much turmoil in the family. Jacob had children by four different women and unfortunately showed preferences in his affection for these women, as well as their chil-

dren. All together the family suffered for Jacob's preferences, but in the end, God used this situation to keep His promises to Jacob.

One of the signs of Jacob's favoritism was the coat of many colors that he gave Joseph. In accent eastern cultures this was a sign of distinction and no doubt just added to the tension between Joseph and his brothers. This coat, along with the dreams that Joseph related to his family, made a difficult situation worse. The New Testament addresses favoritism in James, chapter two, verses 1-7. While this passage does not directly address family relationships, it is generally applicable to all people that we encounter, including family.

*(Continued on page 2)*

<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Favorite Son</b> Kelly Johnson	<b>1</b>
<b>Adversity</b> Steven Baxley	<b>3</b>
<b>Integrity</b> Austin Caldera	<b>5</b>
<b>Ungrateful Dreamers</b> Carol Fertig	<b>6</b>
<b>Giving God The Glory</b> Gary Mangus	<b>8</b>
<b>Colorful Life</b> Eric Jones	<b>10</b>
<b>Sustaining Israel</b> Sarie Jones	<b>11</b>
<b>The Lion Rises</b> Caroline Craig	<b>13</b>
<b>Joseph Tests His Brothers</b> Jon Hall	<b>15</b>
<b>Israel Moves To Egypt</b> Ron Gray	<b>17</b>
<b>Brotherly Love</b> Phil Lumpkin	<b>19</b>

James 2:1-7 (NASB) *“My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?”*

This is not the only scripture to address the unequal treatment of people by Christians. Peter confessed in Acts 10:34 that he now understood that *“God is not one to show partiality.”* Also, Romans 2:11 and 1 Timothy 5:21 address the idea of unequal treatment.

Romans 2:9-11 (NASB) *“There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **For there is no partiality with God.**”*

1 Timothy 5:21 (NASB) *“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, **doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.**”*

If we are to follow God, we need to be equal in our treatment of others. That is especially true in our


  
**North Beach church of Christ**  
**7025 N. Beach St.**  
**Ft Worth, TX 76137**  
**www.nbcoc.org**

families. While we may have one child that we have more in common with, we need to practice equal devotion to all our children. Scripture shows that Jacob created division and disharmony in his family by his unequal love of his wives and children. He exacerbated their contempt for their little brother with the coat of many colors. There were no doubt other actions that Jacob did that showed his children that he cared for one more than the others.

While God was able to use this situation to save Jacob and all his family, it is clear that being the favored son carried a heavy burden for Joseph. His brothers conspired to kill him. He was sold into slavery and was cast into prison. Yet, God was able to use the treachery of Joseph's brothers to accomplish His will.

One must wonder what Joseph thought about his family situation. Was he aware of the problems that were caused by his special status, or was he blind to the special treatment he received? We can only speculate because scripture does not tell us what he thought. We do know from scripture that by the time his brothers came to Egypt to get food, Joseph had reconciled his feelings. I believe his actions show that he forgave his brothers. Joseph understood that God was using him to save his family.

The New Testament teaches fathers to bring their children up *"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Eph 6:4 We are told in the Old Testament essentially the same thing. Proverbs 22:6, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

We are given a great responsibility when God entrusts the souls of our children into our care to raise and educate in God's ways. It is a tragic loss when we play favorites and fail to

nurture and love our children equally. While God used Jacob's failure to accomplish His plan, we have no indication that God will use our failures in the same way. We can only do our best to raise our children, but in the end, they will make their own choices. Our best effort to please and follow God is to raise our children with equal love and attention. That requires different things for different children because they are all different. We must invest our time to learn who they are when they are young and work with them as they grow.

## Adversity

Steven D. Baxley

Genesis 37:25-36. As our examination of the life of Joseph continues in this publication, we now arrive at the time when he will face genuine adversity resulting in a dramatic turn in the course of his life.

Joseph's brothers had originally planned to kill him and throw his body into a pit, but Reuben intervenes on his behalf in hopes of being able to deliver him safely back to his father Jacob (Gen 37:22). While Reuben is away (and the text does not say why or to where he had gone), Judah leads in the alternate plan of selling Joseph to a band of Ishmaelite/Midianite traders who were passing by with their caravan on their way to Egypt. Joseph is sold for 20 shekels of silver (a price that would have been typical for a slave in the Ancient Near East at the time), and he is carried to Egypt (verse 28). Once in Egypt, Joseph is sold to Potiphar, a high-ranking Egyptian military officer. The young man who once enjoyed the favor of his father now faces a life of servitude.

*(Continued on page 4)*

Before moving on, it is worth noting that Joseph is not the only individual facing adversity in this text. Reuben's plans to deliver Joseph have been defeated in his absence. His response illustrates the situation he then feels himself in: *"he tore his clothes and returned to his brothers and said, 'The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?'"* Gen 37:29b-30 His hopes and whatever motivated them, have been destroyed. Once Joseph is gone, the brothers continue their plan to deceive Jacob, convincing him that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal (through use of Joseph's robe, the symbol of his favored status in his father's eyes). Jacob's grief seems to have no end in sight: *"All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, 'No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.'"* Gen 37:35 Jacob will remain ignorant of Joseph's real fate for decades to come.

Adversity is an ever-present part of human existence. Regardless of position, power, or wealth, all people experience difficulties to varying degrees. God in his infinite wisdom, doesn't remove adversity completely from mankind, but often uses it to help individuals to grow. This is clearly seen in Joseph's life. Joseph goes into Egypt as an immature (and some might say naïve) young man. By the time he is 30 years old, he is now ruling over the land of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh himself (Gen 41:46). He is now in a position to aid his family when they are most in need. His maturity is shown in his understanding of God's providence throughout his life, even in difficult times (Gen 50:19-21).

It is easy to trust in God in good times, when his abundant blessings are clearly evident. It is harder to trust in God during diffi-

cult times, when the final outcome is unknown and God's working of providence, although present, remains largely invisible. God's people have always been carried through adversity by faith in His plan to work things out for their ultimate good. Paul wrote of this in his own life in his letter to the church in Philippi: *"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* Ph 4:11-13 Regardless of whether he was in need or abundance, he had learned to rely on God and Christ who gave him strength. Paul expresses the same thought in his letter to the Christians in Rome: *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* Rom 8:28 What Joseph could see clearly in hindsight, he was forced to see by faith while undergoing the trials themselves. The end outcome allowed both Joseph and Paul to look back and see God working in their lives.

James expresses the thought that trials are not just to be endured, but in a certain sense actually welcomed as the catalysts through which the disciple reaches spiritual maturity: *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."* Jas 1:2-4 Later in his letter, James directs his readers to the example of Job, and the steadfastness that he showed under great

*(Continued on page 5)*

adversity: *“Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”* Jas 5:11

As modern Christians, we have numerous examples of how God uses adversity in the lives of his people to accomplish his purposes in the world, and to grow people to maturity. We see this in Joseph, Job, Paul, and James. The Scriptures make it clear that God is using adversity in our lives even today to accomplish the same purposes.

## **Integrity**

Austin Caldera

Genesis 39:1-20. Throughout all of Scripture, God’s people are called on to act with integrity—both when no one is watching and when seemingly everyone is watching. Just about anyone who’s ever held a job, or even entered high school, can probably recall at least one example of someone who circumvented a rule and suffered no consequences or even benefited for it in some way. Meanwhile, those who tirelessly practice integrity are all too often overlooked for career advancements and considered draconian, goody two-shoes, narcs, or just plain “sticklers for the rules.” Nonetheless, integrity is not optional for those who would please the Lord, regardless of its consequences in this life.

One example of a servant of God who acted with integrity despite the consequences is Joseph. Genesis 39:3–4 tells us that Potiphar, perceiving that the Lord was with Joseph, *“made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.”* Yet verses 7

through 9 directs our attention to the one household item—or more specifically person—of which Joseph was not in charge: Potiphar’s wife. As Potiphar’s wife enticed Joseph to commit adultery with her, Joseph repeatedly declined, stating that such an act would be wicked against both Potiphar and God. In other words, for Joseph to lie with Potiphar’s wife would be to act without integrity, he knew it, and accordingly fled from her advances. And what was the outcome? Verses 12 through 20 tell us quite clearly: for his integrity, Joseph was “rewarded” with false accusations of attempted sexual assault and thrown in prison. Even at this early stage in human history, the tendency to lie, cheat, and steal to get what one wants is unfortunately apparent.

Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines integrity as “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values : incorruptibility.” Surely God has wanted His people through all times to firmly adhere to His word, as evidenced by Bible passages such as Deuteronomy 6:5–7 and Matthew 22:36–38. Joseph proved himself incorruptible when Potiphar’s wife approached him with adulterous intent. The inspired writer of Proverbs offers divine guidance: *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.”* Prov 10:9 Additionally, the examples of Elijah, alone against seemingly the whole nation of Israel on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) and Peter, speaking before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4), teach us that we are to seek the approval of God rather than man—and God clearly demands integrity of His people.

That said, firm adherence to any moral code, even that of the one true God, does not guarantee a one-way trip down Easy Street.

*(Continued on page 6)*

Anyone who has lost a promotion to the fellow employee who doesn't mind fudging the numbers ever so slightly knows this, as do those who have lost their jobs for refusing to cut corners and pad profit margins. Joseph, thrown in jail for the sins of his master's wife, certainly did as well. This begs a broader question: why do the unrighteous prosper for their unrighteousness while Christians suffer for meticulously toeing the lines? Surely, "rules were made to be broken" is a both unsatisfying and counterproductive answer.

Fortunately, we are told more, by no less an authority than Jesus Christ that the Lord "*makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.*" Mt 5:45 In addition to Joseph's story, numerous individuals throughout Scripture, such as: the prophets; difficult journeys of Paul; every king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, as well as even a perfunctory glance at the world's state of affairs today, abundantly demonstrate that those most pleasing to the Lord are not always those who get the cushiest gigs, most coveted promotions, biggest raises, etc. If that were the case, Potiphar's wife would have landed in prison and Joseph would have been commended for his praiseworthy conduct. Additionally, Proverbs 29:10 instructs us that "*bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.*" While assassinations are hopefully uncommon in modern office culture, the idea of turning that one person in the building who never cuts corners or breaks the rules into a pariah is, sadly, alive and well.

Widening the lens somewhat, though, one of the great perks of integrity is that it almost always works out over the long haul. Even if a faithful Christian is unfortunate enough never

once to be rewarded for pursuing it in this life, certainly he or she will reap that delayed harvest in the next. Deception and flattery are brittle tools that break easily. Lying may get one what he or she wants in the short term, and skirting the rules can lead to illicit gain—but only for a while. As Proverbs 20:17 teaches, no one reminisces about a successful relationship or career built on fraud and deceit, because it never works out in the long run.

Later events in the story of Joseph are instructive on this issue. After interpreting dreams for two of Pharaoh's officials, he languishes in prison for two more years, but is eventually elevated to second-in-command over all of Egypt and used by God to save large swaths of the region from famine. He never abandoned his integrity, even for a moment, and continued to trust in God's providence. Contrastingly, while the inspired word never informs us of the ultimate fate of Potiphar's marriage, it is not difficult to read the tea leaves. Just as Joseph was eventually recompensed for his integrity in spades, he surely knew and eagerly anticipated the ultimate reward of eternity in heaven with God, reserved only for those who faithfully follow His commandments—to practice integrity.

## Ungrateful Dreamers

Carol Fertig

Genesis 39:21-40:23. Joseph seemed to have a roller coaster life. First a dream showing great honor for him was followed by the anger of his brothers and the disapproval of his parents, then his favored child status elicited a terrible revenge from his brothers. A position of honor and responsibility in Potiphar's

(Continued on page 7)

house gave way through the treachery and deceit of Potiphar's wife to Joseph's being put into Pharaoh's prison! All this occurred while Joseph was still quite young (17 when he was sold into Egyptian slavery), but prepared him for the ultimate betrayal occurring before he would attain the position God had planned for him (Genesis 50:20).

Being imprisoned because of the lies of Potiphar's wife was hardly an auspicious beginning for a man who would grow into the leader, second only to Pharaoh himself in Egypt. The reader of the story of Joseph can lose sight of the amount of time he spent in the prison, but scripture says it was "some time" after Joseph came to the prison that Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were casted into the same prison, and "some time" later before they both dreamed the dreams that Joseph interpreted (Genesis 40:1, 4). It was a long enough time that Joseph proved himself competent to run the whole prison, and it would be two years more before Pharaoh's cupbearer "remembered" Joseph and the talents which moved him out of prison and into Pharaoh's upper echelon. He had an opportunity to learn how the business of acquiring food and other necessities for the prison population was conducted, as well as maintaining order and keeping some sort of security in effect and whatever else was necessary to maintain a prison. Genesis 39:22-23 says *"And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with Him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed."* These skills would be invaluable later when

Joseph was responsible for the welfare of the entire nation of Egypt. He was prepared to conduct business on an international basis, as well as secure the safety and prosperity of God's people. God was preparing Joseph for his part in creating the nation of Israel.

Joseph's patience must certainly have been tried during this time. When Pharaoh sent for the cupbearer and baker to be returned to him, Joseph asked them to *". . . remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house."* Gen 40:14 It was soon apparent that the ungrateful dreamers did not honor Joseph's request, so he was stuck where he was for at least two more years (Gen 41:1). However, there is no mention that Joseph lost hope, neglected his work, stopped looking for the opportunities God was providing, or became embittered. God knows when the time is right for everything (Rom 5:6; Eccl 3:1-8).

The opportunities God put into Joseph's life were recognized and acted upon. When the cupbearer and baker dreamed their prophetic dreams, it was not a strange situation to Joseph. He had a history with dreams from God and their interpretation! Joseph noticed that the men were troubled, set about to find about why and did something about it. The problem for Joseph was that he trusted Pharaoh's servants to be grateful to God through Joseph for the interpretations, but they forgot all about him rather than helping him. It smacks of being selfish and ungrateful, thankfully the cupbearer finally remembered Joseph at a time when it might have brought him (the cupbearer) favor from Pharaoh. Joseph embodied the principle later taught to the Colossians by the apostle Paul: *"Whatever you do,*

*(Continued on page 8)*

*work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” Col 3:23* He understood God was with him and had a plan for him, and that although man forgets and is ungrateful, God would not desert him.

Joseph knew that God had a plan for him. This is revealed later in his story when he tells his brothers God meant it for good, even though the brothers meant evil against him. (Gen 45:5-9; 50:20) Joseph had faith like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in that he could not know how things would turn out, but he would go on serving God no matter what. Joseph stuck to the plan his whole life, taking his place in God’s plan to build a nation through which to bring Messiah.

The lessons from Joseph will make our lives more profitable and meaningful to ourselves and to the Lord. Joseph pretty much rolled with the punches, trusting God, being patient, seizing opportunities and working. God warned His people later about depending on other nations to help them in times of trouble (“horses and chariots”) rather than leaning on our Creator. Joseph learned early in his life that men will desert and disappoint you, but God never will. Providence is evident throughout Joseph’s history, and it is ours, too, if we will find and acknowledge it (Rom 8:28). God is in control, and there is tremendous comfort in that.

## **Giving God the Glory**

Gary Mangus

Genesis 41:1-32. Without hesitation, Joseph had offered and did interpret each troubling dream for the cupbearer and the baker, saying to them, “**Do not interpretations be-**

**long to God? Please tell them to me.”** And when Joseph relayed God’s favorable message to the cupbearer that he would be restored to his office; Joseph asked the cupbearer to remember him and to mention him to Pharaoh. (Gen 40:8-14) It had been two years and it would have been natural to hope for a quick release from prison, but the cupbearer did not remember. Joseph at times must have bordered on despair and wondered if God was going to release him from the suffering. Yet Joseph keeps his faith and his love of God during the years in prison. We know that God works in His own time and in His own way; Joseph was now about 30 years old and better prepared for his next assignment. He did know God was working through him since God had given him the favor of prison keeper (Gen 39:21) and provided the interpretation of the cupbearer and baker’s dreams. But he did not know what God had planned for him next! Yet, he humbled himself and gave God all the glory. And Joseph demonstrated his true love of God by being a willing servant with each assigned role in God’s redemptive plan.

After a full two years, Joseph’s next assignment starts when God sends his lifesaving message in two dreams, “*Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and*

*(Continued on page 9)*

*blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. So, in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.” Gen 41:1-8*

*“Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember my offenses today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.” Gen 41:9-13*

*“Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’ Joseph answered Pharaoh, ‘**It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.**’” Gen 41:14-17*

Joseph is quick to point out to Pharaoh that the interpretation of the dream **“it is not in me,”** it is from God. Joseph is confident that God will provide him the understanding of the dream, thus giving all the glory to God. Then Pharaoh tells the two dreams to Joseph, including the detail of waking up to remember each dream. (Gen 41:18-24)

*“Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.’” Gen 41:25-32*

Joseph delivered God’s message of seven years of plenty followed by seven years of severe famine; repeated to emphasize “shortly.” We can learn from Joseph’s willing service to others, actions and demonstrated humble interpretation of the dreams to the ruler of the land. Like Joseph, we can:

- be an active participant in God’s plan of delivering salvation through His message
- gain the courage to be a willing servant of God and share the word of God
- show love in positive interaction with leaders and others you meet
- demonstrate a strong love of God
- grow your faith, accepting God’s plan and His time frame
- always be humble and give God the glory

*(Continued on page 10)*

Also, we may find ourselves in similar positions wondering what will happen and wanting relief from suffering. We can take heart from God's word: *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* Rom 8:28 *"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* Col 3:16-17 And thus always giving God the Glory.

## Colorful Life

Eric Jones

Genesis 41:33-57. The story of Joseph overflows with color. From the coat his father gave him to the varied locales in which he lived and the many different circumstances in which he found himself, the story of Joseph is definitely not lacking in color. How dull our own lives seem when compared to Joseph's!

Many of Joseph's personality traits can only be inferred, but I think it is safe to say he had quite the colorful personality. Rising through the ranks of the Egyptian hierarchy no doubt required him to fill many different roles to many different people. He must have been wise, charming, shrewd, compassionate, and a host of other things. Such a colorful personality for a man so few in years.

Imagine having that many colors at your disposal. I can recall, as a smug little eight-year-old, thinking I was on top of the world when I showed up to class with a giant Crayola box containing a whopping 64 crayons. So many

colors, so many possibilities. There wasn't a picture that I couldn't bedazzle with ease.

Unlike an over-confident second grader, however, Joseph actually knew what to do with all the colors in his crayon box. Like a skilled artist, he could use the colors available to him to turn any canvas into a masterpiece. It seemed that Joseph could effortlessly win over just about anyone he came across.

Despite all that Joseph had going for him along the way, he nevertheless suffered many setbacks. Success always seems to garner envy in the eyes of those less fortunate. Joseph would rise to prominence only to be struck down and lose everything he had worked for. However, Joseph would always find a way to use some part of his colorful personality to rise again and achieve an even higher tier in life. For the sake of this article, I would like to delve into two themes that will hopefully help us come to a better understanding of what it means to lose everything yet gain even more in return.

Firstly, we must not be always willing to accept defeat, but rather see every setback as an opportunity. When life deals us a bad hand, we're often so focused on the tragedy laid before us that we fail to see something better just around the corner.

The obvious example here is asking myself what I would do if I were to lose my job. Most of my life hinges on the assumption that I will continue to be gainfully employed. I can see ahead to the day I retire and look forward to closing that chapter of my life and reaping the benefits of what I have worked so hard for all these years. It gives me comfort to know that I



have a plan and all I have to do is be patient and see it through to the end.

However, I must always bear in mind that everything can vanish in the blink of an eye. I may not have a job tomorrow. Everything that I have gained can be taken away as easily as it was given to me. Do I have a plan if this happens? Will I be able to recover and find another job to support my family? I shudder to think about that, but should my life move sideways I need to be prepared to move forward and jump on any new opportunities that God may place before me.

It's natural to fear a worst-case scenario, but let's consider Joseph for a moment. Even after being stripped of his position in Potiphar's house, he immediately got back to work influencing those around him. Instead of lamenting his loss, Joseph quickly rose to prominence yet again. Not even a prison sentence could hold him back. He won the trust of those around him and even managed to garner favor from Pharaoh himself. (Gen 41:38-40) Not bad for a man cruelly thrown in prison and forgotten.

Secondly, as we read about how Joseph rose to power in Egypt, we should pause to consider the timeframe involved. While no specific span of time is mentioned, I struggle to believe that Joseph rose to prominence overnight. Joseph earned both the trust and respect of Pharaoh—and those are things that are built up over time.

I always like to consider the story of Peter when talking about the time it takes to reach one's true potential. Peter was a bit of a diamond in the rough initially, but Christ knew what he was ultimately capable of achieving. Jesus tested Peter when He called him from the boat to walk on the water with Him (Mt

14:28-33). Peter was rebuffed by a voice from heaven during the transfiguration (Mt 17:4-5). Let's also not forget how Peter denied Christ three times, despite being warned that he would do so (Lu 22:54-62).

The list goes on and on, but it's easy to see how Jesus was molding Peter like a lump of clay, so that he could become the tool Christ needed. It took time for Peter to learn all these lessons and take them to heart. However, Jesus knew that it would be time well spent as Peter went on to become one of the most prolific early Christians. None of us are perfect right out of the gate, but through patience and perseverance we can be assured that God is working through each of us.

Like Joseph, we all suffer setbacks from time to time, but let's learn a lesson or two from his example. There is always a path forward if we are willing to look for it. We can turn any defeat into a victory if we are willing to work toward a greater goal. Joseph never stopped looking forward and was always able to overcome hardship. God has a plan for each of us, and we can all receive the joys He sets before us if we continue to work for Him.

## **Sustaining Israel**

Sarie Jones

Genesis 42:1-38. It has been said that God has a plan for us all. No matter our situation in life, God will use us to fulfill His will if we only let Him. This was certainly the case in the ever-changing life of Joseph. Genesis 42 shows us the scene where ten of Jacob's sons come to Joseph to ask him if they can buy food for their

families. The resulting events are unquestionably providential and show God working His plan to sustain the nation of Israel through Joseph.

When Jacob sends his sons (sans Benjamin) to go to Egypt to buy food, he has no idea that he is sending them to reunite with his beloved son Joseph. The families throughout the lands were starving, but, thanks to God working through Joseph, Egypt had enough grain stored to be able to sell it to others outside of the country. God had not only worked through Joseph to save countless lives throughout the land—he was also reuniting a broken family.

Joseph was the governor of Egypt and therefore in charge of distributing and selling the stored grain. When his brothers came to him, they had no idea that it was the brother they had sold into slavery so long ago standing before them, but Joseph recognized them immediately. It might be hard to believe that the ten brothers wouldn't recognize Joseph, but remember that the last time they had seen him, he was a teenager and many years had since passed. Now he was a grown man in a position of great authority who was speaking the Egyptian language and probably dressed very finely in Egyptian garb. They certainly wouldn't be expecting to see their long lost brother in that situation.

Regardless of Joseph's recollection, he decided to pretend that he didn't know them and accused them of being spies. It is interesting that he decided to do this after remembering the dreams he had about the sheaves of grain—as well as the sun, moon and stars—bowing down to him. Telling his brothers about these dreams resulted in him being sold into slavery in the first place, but

it also ultimately led to his current situation. It must have seemed like the worst thing in the world when he was sold, but God had such a huge vision that Joseph never could have imagined what was in store for him.

After being accused as spies, the brothers were to be tested in a way so as to prove that they were not spies. Of course, Joseph knew that they were who they said they were, but he came up with a way to see his brother Benjamin by getting them to bring him to Egypt while keeping Simeon as a prisoner until they returned. The group of brothers saw this as punishment for what they had done to Joseph all those years ago. It is interesting that they were still plagued with guilt about their act against Joseph and that it is included in Scripture as a clue to their character. It makes me wonder if they attributed that act to any other hard times that befell them in life. Nevertheless, Joseph's reaction to this discussion is revealing of his true thought process. He began to secretly weep because of this conversation.

The fact that Joseph begins to weep really jumps out at me in this passage. It seems to have begun a series of events that leads to an amazing amount of grace and forgiveness given towards the actions of his brothers. Those actions will be spoken about in depth in other articles, but he began by returning the silver each man paid to his sack of grain. This means that Joseph gave them their grain for free. At this point the brothers were actually more scared by the gesture than warmed, but it was a beginning.

Through Joseph's forgiveness, he was not only able to eventually repair a broken family; he was also able to literally keep his family alive. God's chosen people and the line to His

*(Continued on page 13)*

son Jesus were planned to go through Judah's family, but Joseph had a job to do in making sure that God's plan was carried out. Joseph stayed faithful to God and practiced love and forgiveness, and, as a result, God was able to fulfill His plan for the twelve tribes and the birth of Jesus through the line of Judah.

It is easy to lose perspective as we read some of these Biblical accounts. These were not just "characters," as we tend to refer to them, but as human as you or me. It would have been easy for Joseph to lose heart after being betrayed by his brothers, becoming a slave in a foreign land, being falsely accused, and enduring an ancient prison, but he didn't. We are shown his example of staying true to God no matter what and the great things that he was able to accomplish because of it. If he could endure those things, we too can persevere through difficulties and road blocks, because Joseph teaches us an excellent lesson in attitude. We should absolutely seek opportunities to serve God but another important aspect of our Christian walk is how we handle the situations that come our way. In many ways this is much more difficult, but handling both tough and joyous situations with grace and maturity is what I see in Joseph's life. No matter what is thrown in our path, God is in control of our lives, so we should know that we can handle absolutely anything—through God's grace.

## **The Lion (Judah) Rises**

Caroline Craig

Genesis 43:1-34. *"God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth,"* Joseph tells his brothers. Gen 45:7 The Lord

used Joseph to save the physical lineage from which Jesus Christ the Messiah was born, and to develop Judah into a father fit to head the kingly tribe. The two stories show Jacob's favoritism toward Rachel's sons—first Joseph in chapter thirty-seven and then Benjamin in chapters forty-two and three—and juxtapose two pictures of Judah: first the selfish brother who enslaves his brother for gain, and then a selfless brother who takes responsibility for and offers to enslave himself to save his brother's life.

At the start of the story, there's little to recommend Judah. The fourth-born son of the unloved Leah harbors murderous hate toward the favored Joseph. He and his other brothers ignore Joseph's cries for mercy, cast him into a pit, and set down to enjoy a meal as they contemplate what to do with him. Judah sees a tidy way to rid himself of Joseph while lining his pockets when a caravan of Ishmaelites passes: *"What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites."* Gen 37:26-27 The rest agree (minus the absent Reuben), and they sell Joseph for twenty shekels of silver. Judah doesn't stick around to endure his father's years of grief. The ten brothers came back, delivered their ruse (Joseph's coat dipped in goat blood) to their father, and let him come to his own conclusions. Shortly after, Judah abandons his family; *"And it came about at that time that Judah departed from his brothers."* Gen 38:1 He goes to see his friend Hirah the Adullamite, and there he starts and raises a family of his own. Ultimately, his daughter-in-law confronts him for (yet again) abdicating responsibility and cutting off the line of his kinsmen (first by cutting off Joseph from his people, and second by cutting

*(Continued on page 14)*

off his son's name by preventing his widow's marriage to his youngest son.) *"She [Tamar] is more righteous than I,"* he responds. Gen 38:26 This is the first evidence of the change in Judah's character. By Genesis 42, Judah is back with his brothers and living under similar circumstances as before. His father still treats him and his brothers with disdain – *"Why are you staring at one another? . . . Go down [to Egypt] and buy some food for us from that place, so that we may live and not die."* – while still favoring Benjamin, who isn't to go with them, for *"I am afraid that harm may befall him."* Gen 42:2,4 Later in Egypt, Judah shows his own repentance in a collective confession from the ten brothers when they say, *"Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen, therefore this distress has come upon us."* Gen 42:21 By Genesis 43:9, Judah offers to take the responsibility for his brother Benjamin's well-being. The food from Egypt doesn't last. Jacob says, less mean-spirited than the first time, *"Go back, buy us a little food."* Gen 43:2 Judah reminds him in no uncertain words that the Egyptian ruler told them he wouldn't give them anymore food unless they brought Benjamin. *"Send the lad with me,"* Judah says. *"I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever."* Gen 43:8 Six chapters before, Judah hated the favored Joseph enough to sell him into slavery. By chapter forty-three, Judah's father is an embittered old man. Jacob still favors Rachel's offspring and treats as a precious child this son Benjamin, who is actually the father of several children himself (46:21, 26), but he is so stifled

by his father's favoritism that there is little in the narrative to suggest he is a man. And yet, despite the similarity in circumstances, this time Judah takes on accountability for Benjamin's life. It could be argued – with perhaps a grain of truth – that Judah doesn't mean what he says here in Genesis 43:8-9. Maybe he only says whatever he needs to so he can get food and rescue Simeon, who is, after all, his full-blooded brother. In the rest of forty-three, Judah fades into the backdrop again.

Back in Egypt he and his brothers are wined and dined in Joseph's home where his host treats them with confusing kindness and where, yet again, Benjamin is honored above all of them (Gen 43:34). The climax of the story in chapter forty four proves Judah is a man of changed character. The stolen cup is found in Benjamin's sack (put there by Joseph), and Judah is presented with a remarkable opportunity: the Egyptian ruler will tidily rid Judah of the last of Rachel's favored line, and will let the rest of them go free with the money from their prior grain purchase (Gen 43:23). The Judah of several years ago had sold his Joseph for only twenty shekels of silver. This older and changed Judah falls to the ground before Joseph and cries, *"What can we say to my Lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants."* Gen 44:16 Judah begs the ruler to let him take Benjamin's place, *"let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers."* Gen 44:33 Moved to tears, Joseph can no longer hide his emotions, abandons his psychologically cruel ruse, and admits that he is Joseph. My brother-in-law told me the story of Joseph is actually the story of Judah. God

*(Continued on page 15)*

uses Joseph to shape and to save the father of the tribe from which the Messiah comes. He who had enslaved Joseph later offers to enslave himself to save Benjamin. Judah's self-sacrificial attitude is the catalyst for the reunion of Jacob's sons. In offering himself to save his brother, Judah becomes himself a shadow of the Messiah, who sacrificed himself to reunite the sons and daughters of God. The last time Jacob speaks to Judah, he passes on to him that promise which had been made to Abraham, Isaac, and himself: Judah is a lion, and *"your father's son shall bow down to you . . . The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples."* Gen 49:10

## Joseph Tests His Brothers

Jon Hall

Genesis 44:1—45:28 As we continue to look at the life of Joseph, we come to a major turning point for Joseph. For many years he has traveled the path God established for him, separated from his father and the brothers who betrayed him. We come to a time in Joseph's life where he has been prospering in Egypt, set in a place of authority just under the Pharaoh, given a wife, and having 2 sons. All is seemingly going well for Joseph, despite the initial intentions of his brothers. The famine that had overtaken the land had grown severe, yet Joseph had properly prepared Egypt for this famine. The surrounding nations are coming to Egypt, or more accurately, to Joseph, to buy grain in order to survive. As noted in earlier articles, Joseph's brothers have also been coming from Canaan to buy grain.

We now see in Genesis, chapters 44 and 45, the conclusion of his brothers second trip to Egypt to purchase grain. Throughout these encounters with his brothers, Joseph has one primary desire. To be reunited with his brother Benjamin, for he and Joseph were both sons of Rachel, so Joseph had a special affection for him.



Joseph arrives at a plan to force his brothers to leave Benjamin in Egypt with him. Joseph had his steward fill his brothers' sacks, not only with the food they came to purchase, but also the money they'd used to buy the grain. In addition, he had

his silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack. The steward was to allow the men to depart and then overtake them later and accuse them of stealing his silver cup. Afterward he would tell his brothers that they could leave, but Benjamin would be required to stay and be his slave.

As the plot is played out, and Joseph tells the men what is to become of Benjamin, Judah steps up and relays the hesitation Jacob had in allowing Benjamin to accompany them, fearing that some evil would befall him on the journey and that he would surely die if that were to occur. Judah tells Joseph that he promised Jacob that he would be responsible for anything that happened to Benjamin and begged Joseph to keep him instead, so that he would not bring any evil upon his father.

After this, Joseph can hold his emotions in no longer. He weeps aloud and admits to his brothers that he is Joseph, the brother

*(Continued on page 16)*

they sold into slavery. Now surely Joseph will have his revenge; right? That is what would happen in the movies anyway. Joseph would laugh and tell them all the evils he had suffered because of their betrayal, and then he would severely punish or kill those responsible. However, that is not what is in Joseph's heart, and that is not what God would have wanted. When we look at Joseph's response at this point, I'd like to point out three lessons we can learn.

Joseph acknowledges what his brothers had done to him, he accepts what has been done, and how he not only thrived, but by God's grace, he prospered wherever he found himself. Too often, when someone is wronged today in our society, we stop after number one. We readily acknowledge how someone has wronged us, but then we go straight down the path of how we will achieve our revenge. Well, we don't call it revenge, we say it's justice. But if we look in our heart, we know better.

Let's look briefly at each of these three ideas as it pertains to Joseph's account, and how we may learn from that. First, Joseph recognizes his situation and how he got there. Notice his first statement in Gen. Chapter 45:4. *"I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."* Joseph doesn't beat around the bush. He fully spells out to his brothers what they had done. He doesn't sugar coat their actions. I think that's important for us as Christians today. Many times people try to just ignore what someone has done to them and we think that will allow us to get past what has occurred. Instead, it only allows the wrong to fester and our anger to grow, often without us realizing it for long periods of time. We need to learn

from Joseph here. Acknowledging the wrong that someone has done to us and bringing it to light is an important step to both healing and forgiveness.

Next we see that Joseph didn't stop there, he then accepts what has happened to him. Joseph's next statement shows amazing insight, as well as mercy and love for his brothers. In verse 5 he says *"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for **GOD** sent me before you to preserve life."* In verse seven he says something similar and is more specific when he says. *". . . to save your lives by a great deliverance."* And finally in verse 8 he says; *"it is not you who sent me here, but God:"* Joseph didn't ignore what his brothers had done to him, but he was able to look past that act, and recognize the hand of God in this situation, as well as others he had been through since initially being sold into captivity. We see far too often today where someone has been wronged, and they let that one incident consume them. They may even find themselves in a much better situation afterward than before, such as Joseph in this example, yet they struggle to recognize and appreciate the wonderful blessings they now enjoy, due to the resentment and anger they allow to be of first importance to them. For me, Joseph serves as a great reminder to always look for the good in any situation that we may encounter in life and not dwell on the pain of any one specific event or moment. This can be a challenge, and is often not done quickly, however; if we continually look to God for strength and courage, we may be better able to see the good and overcome the bad, when we encounter challenges in life.

Finally, Joshua not only accepted what had

*(Continued on page 17)*

happened to him and where it had led him, but he then thrived in those situations to the best of his ability. Sold by his brothers, becoming a slave in Egypt and subsequently a prisoner, Joseph had every reason to be bitter and angry. However, Joseph uses the opportunities he has to earn the favor of the Pharaoh, leading him to thrive as his second in command over all the land. When gaining this power, he could have easily used it as a means to punish his brothers for what they had done to him. However, instead of focusing on what had been done to him, he focuses on thriving in the place and situation he finds himself in. He sets out to be the best leader he can be and thereby protecting both the Egyptian people and ultimately his own family. Now as his brothers stand before him, he is able to relate to them how he has been brought to this place by God, to save his family from this famine. And due to his ability to set aside the evil done to him and thrive where God had put him, he is greatly blessed by God in this and other situations.

Do we want to enjoy blessings from God. The first challenge is to not let the problems we encounter cloud our perspective of the life we have been given by God. Even in the worst of times, God is there. We often miss the blessings that God is giving us in this life due to the fact that we are focusing only on those things that have not gone our way; the challenges; or the outright evil done to us. Ultimately, God desires to bless us in eternity. We need to be able to see past the temporary struggles and mistreatment we may endure in this life, to truly take hold of and enjoy both the blessing of God in this life and the hope of eternal life God has planned for us as His children.

## Israel Moves to Egypt

Ron Gray

Genesis 46:1-47:31. Jacob is the man that even the children in our Bible classes know as the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, and the father of Joseph and his 11 brothers and one sister. Just before the birth of Jacob's son Benjamin, and the death of his beloved wife Rachel during that childbirth, God came to speak to Jacob. First, God told him, *"no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name."* Gen 35:10 [On a personal note, I can relate to this, having an Israel Gray in each of the 5 generations before me!] Then, God promised Israel the land that He had given to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Israel's posterity. children to come after him.

Just after learning that Joseph had not been killed by a "fierce animal" (Gen 37) but was alive (Gen 45), Israel took all of his family and possessions to go down to Egypt to see his beloved son. When he came to Beer-sheba, Israel offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. At that point God spoke to Israel making six promises (Gen 46:2-4):

*"I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, For there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, And I will also bring you up again, And Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."*

The Lord emphasized that He is the same God in whom Israel's family had trusted for generations. Israel should not fear that going to Egypt was the wrong move; leaving the land where Abraham had so-

(Continued on page 18)

journed would not go contrary to God's plan. In fact, God tells Israel that He will make a great nation from him. God also gives a comforting statement, "I myself will go with you . . ." Israel need not fear that he would be alone in a strange country where various creatures were worshipped, but not the Lord God Almighty. God had His hand upon Joseph blessing him for many years within that polytheistic nation. As the Lord would tell Joshua years later, "I will not leave you or forsake you." Jos 1:5 This is true for Joseph, Israel, and for us as their children today.

The Lord tells Israel that He will bring him up again (out of Egypt). Israel would not know at 130 years old whether he would make the trip back to Canaan's land, but his trust was in the word of the Lord. As with many promises in the Bible, timing is absolutely in the Lord's hands! We pray for many things and may begin to wonder when those prayers will be answered. A wise servant of God knows what to ask for and leaves the questions of when and how up to Him. Often the answers are truly amazing!

Israel wept many tears years earlier when he believed that his son Joseph had died. However, through God's province he would again embrace his son, and bask in the honor of Joseph's exalted position and in his presence for the rest of his life. Joseph did indeed "close the eyes" of Israel at the end of his life.

There were tears of joy in Goshen when Israel and his long lost son embraced. "Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive," Israel told Joseph. Gen 46:30 Any parent would understand this statement; it simply says, my child who was lost is here with me and my life is now complete! Seeing Joseph arrayed in his Egyptian clothing,

and in his chariot, a powerful leader of one of the greatest nations of their time, Israel may have expected a cooler reception, but he could see that Joseph was a loving son and a diligent brother and had not succumbed to arrogance.

Joseph settles his family there in Goshen, the best of the land of Egypt. Since they were shepherds which were an abomination to the Egyptians, they were separated, isolated from the general population, thereby keeping the budding nation of Israel pure.

Israel was brought to meet with Pharaoh, blessing him before and again after the meeting. We may wonder how Israel felt standing before such a great man, but knowing what we know now, we can see who the truly "great" one was. Was it the unknown king or the father of the great nation of Israel from whom Christ the Savior would come? Israel was 130 years old and yet told Pharaoh, "*few and evil have been the days of the years of my life.*" It seems that we all look back on our lives as we age (though we probably won't ever see 130!) and lament our thoughts and actions. Israel may be speaking for us all here; the years flew by and sins littered our pathways.

Joseph continues in his work of dealing with the Egyptians during the famine. He collected the money for the grain which he had stored and was now overseeing. But soon the money was gone and the citizens knew that they must sell off all that they had. Starting with their livestock, then their lands, and finally themselves, they became servants to their own nation. With wisdom and a caring heart, Joseph laid out a plan to move forward. He gave the seed to sow in

the land and told them to keep four-fifths of the crops for their families and to give one-fifth to Pharaoh who now owned all the land.

Israel lived another 17 years in the land of Goshen and called on Joseph to promise him that he will be buried with his fathers in the land of Canaan. Joseph swore to his father that his desire would be fulfilled.

## Brotherly Love

Phil Lumpkin

Genesis 49:28-50:26. As we bring this study of Joseph's life to a conclusion, the following verse seems to aptly summarize his life, *"And we know that God **causes all things** to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."* Rom 8:28 The phrase "causes all things" includes **bad**, as well as **good**. The complex dynamics of Joseph's family relationships undoubtedly qualifies as one of those **bad** things, yet in spite of human weakness, we readily see God working through this dysfunctional family to accomplish His will.

In his wildest dreams, Jacob the Patriarch, probably never intended to journey to Egypt, certainly he didn't plan to die there. But after blessing his 12 sons he issued specific instructions about his burial, then was gathered to his fathers. He wanted to be buried back in Canaan, with Leah, in the cave, in the field of Machpelah, near Hebron where Abraham, Isaac and their wives were buried. Abraham purchased this field and cave from the sons of Heth, the Hittite (Gen 23) when Sarah died.

A death in the family is often the catalyst for squabbling family members to set aside

their differences and table their troubles (at least temporarily), and that seemed to have been the case in Jacob's family. After his death, he was embalmed and with Pharaoh's blessing a great procession of family, friends, mourners, along with many Egyptian officials respectfully carried Israel's remains to be buried in the land of Canaan as he had directed. Interestingly this entourage may have followed similar routing that the whole nation of Israel would follow some four hundred years into the future. At any rate the twelve brothers seemingly worked together, under Joseph's leadership, to honor their father's instructions. The coordinated *"great and sorrowful lamentation"* was observed for seven days and made a definite impression on the Canaanites and other people who lived in the Promised Land.

Another interesting observation is associated with the location of the cave where Israel was buried. The cave is located in the region where Israel and his eleven sons sojourned before they migrated to Egypt during the great famine. The lingering effects of the famine may have influenced their actions, but some or all of the eleven sons could easily have left the procession of mourners and escaped further dealings with Joseph, but they didn't.

Back in Egypt the eleven brothers, still insecure in their relationship with Joseph, began to fret about the possibility of revenge, *"what if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him?"* Gen 50:15 Obviously that is the elephant in the room now that Israel's fatherly influence was dead and buried. As a reminder, sin always has consequences. To their credit, Joseph's

*(Continued on page 20)*

brothers knew they had mistreated him and freely admitted their sin, but their guilty consciences seemed to haunt them. They couldn't seem to forgive themselves.

To assuage their consciences they, "sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'your father charged before he died, saying, 'thus you shall say to Joseph, Please forgive, I beg you the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.'" Gen 50:16-17 Once again we have an interesting point, the text doesn't actually say that Israel initiated this action before he died, although it is possible and consistent with a father's love to want to bring his sons together and to circumvent revenge. Whoever initiated this action, it is Joseph's reaction that says it all, "And Joseph wept when they spoke to him."

"Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?' 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.'" Gen 50:18-21

Isn't forgiveness marvelous? When we drop our "defensive shields" and love as the Lord loved when He said, "Father, forgive

them for they do not know what they are doing." Lu 23:34 Forgiveness is powerful!

Jesus said in His model prayer, "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." Mt 6:12-15 Joseph seems to have understood this concept and displayed this brotherly love in his day-to-day life.

I believe his brothers saw this godliness in Joseph even before Israel died and were willing to take a chance that he would extend forgiveness to them even after Israel was gone.

Following the seven years of famine we might have expected the eleven and perhaps even Joseph himself to return home to Canaan. They were foreigners in Egypt, even with their special status as the family of Joseph, the ruler who saved the world from starvation. But they didn't. God's next plan was unfolding, eventually another Pharaoh would arise who did not know Joseph nor what things he did.

Joseph is special because of his love of God and his willingness to let God work in his life to accomplish His will and to give Him the glory. Joseph was in turn blessed with two sons who eventually became the heads of two tribes – Ephraim and Manasseh.

