

Genesis 42:1-38 and 43:1-14

Famine had gripped the then known world, and Joseph opened the storehouses of Egypt to supply the tremendous need.

Egypt wasn't the only country affected, but it was the only country that was prepared.

Genesis 41:57 **"And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands."** And, of course, Canaan was one of those lands.

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So as we begin Genesis 42, the scene shifts from Egypt to the Promised Land, and, not surprisingly, to Joseph's family.

V 1-2 "Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2: And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

Jacob must have wondered why his sons hadn't heard the news.

He was an old man now, and he had 10 able-bodied sons in the business, but it had fallen to him to come up with an answer.

Certainly they knew the situation was getting worse every day, but they had never mentioned the subject of Egypt. They just looked at one another, shrugged their shoulders, and said nothing.

Jacob just couldn't understand their seeming
lack of concern.

But we know what the problem was, don't we?
In spite of the fact that Joseph had been
gone for 20 years, they were still
haunted by his cries.

It almost seemed that they would rather
starve than take the chance of meeting
Joseph again.

No, all the corn in the world couldn't drag
them down to Egypt.

Perhaps they might see him slaving away
under the hand of some cruel master.

And not only might they see him, but Joseph
might see them.

They could almost feel his lifeless eyes
boring into their backs.

No, Egypt was the last place in the world they wanted to go, but they couldn't avoid the inevitable.

When their father said--"**get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die,**" there was no way out.

They were simply forced to face the music.

V 3-4 **"And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.**

4: But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him."

By this time, Benjamin was about 23 years old.

Jacob had lost Joseph when he was 17, and he wasn't about to take any chances with Rachel's only other son.

So Jacob's sons reluctantly packed up their caravan and began the long trip to Egypt.

But the journey wasn't nearly long enough for them. Before they knew it, they were standing in the long line that had formed outside the storehouse.

Fortunately they hadn't seen anyone who looked remotely like Joseph, but they were still nervous.

V 5-6 **"And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.
6: And Joseph was the Governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land---."**

It seems a little strange that an important man like Joseph would waste his time selling corn.

After all, the governor of an entire country should have clerks that could deal with these matters.

And certainly his insistence on doing the job personally must have cost him some very long days.

However, when V 6 says "**he it was that sold to all the people of the land,**" it might have been referring to the foreigners rather than the Egyptians themselves.

And certainly, in the case of foreign trade, it would be prudent for Joseph to deal with it personally.

All foreigners would be required to answer certain questions before they received

a license to buy corn, and that would be his opportunity to make sure that spies didn't slip by.

And being the responsible man that he was, he would want to be absolutely certain that his food program didn't endanger the country's security.

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But there was another reason for Joseph's personal interest in the foreign trade. Being a man of discernment, he would know that sooner or later his brothers had to show up.

Oh, he definitely didn't want to miss his brothers, but not for the reason you might think.

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Continuing on with V 6--"**and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down**

**themselves before him with their faces
to the earth."**

They were doing the very thing they said
they would never do.

Without realizing it, they were literally
fulfilling Joseph's first dream.

V 7-8 **"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he
knew them, but made himself strange
unto them, and spake roughly unto them;
and he said unto them, Whence come ye?
And they said, From the land of Canaan
to buy food.**

**8: And Joseph knew his brethren, but
they knew not him."**

It's not too surprising that they didn't
recognize him, even though he knew
them.

Many of Joseph's brothers were mature adults when he left home, and would have changed very little over the years.

Also, they were dressed in shepherd's clothes, which was their normal attire.

On the other hand, Joseph's situation was completely different.

He had only been 17 when he was taken away, and now he was 38.

Besides that, he was dressed in the splendid garments that went along with his job.

And he was speaking Egyptian, being assisted by an interpreter.

And even if he did look vaguely familiar, the whole idea was out of the realm of possibility.

No, there's no way their brother could ever be the Governor of Egypt!

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Likewise, Israel refused to believe that Jesus, that lonely carpenter from Nazareth, could ever be their Messiah. They didn't believe in Him then, and they don't believe it now.

And their general treatment over the years has not helped the situation at all.

For hundreds of years, they were persecuted and maligned in the name of Jesus.

Yes, **"blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.**

26: And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

In like manner, Joseph's brethren were gazing upon their deliverer, but they didn't recognize him.

And not only that, but Joseph didn't want them to recognize him, at least not at that particular time.

No, he didn't want to reveal himself until he could evaluate their attitude, and you certainly can't blame him for that.

The last time he saw them, there was murder in their hearts, and he had no way of knowing if anything had changed.

Of course, in his exalted position, he didn't fear them anymore, but their attitude was very important to him.

However, there was more than his personal feelings involved.

I'm sure Joseph was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and God wasn't ready to reveal Joseph to them just yet.

He wanted to lead them down the pathway of tribulation that would eventually lead them to genuine repentance.

They needed to face their sin in regard to their brother before God could take the next step.

Yes, it was for their own good, as God's plan for Israel has always been for their ultimate good.

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I'm not sure how much of God's plan Joseph understood, but he certainly knew it wasn't God's time to reveal himself to his brethren.

So, in spite of his desire to relieve their anxiety, it wasn't God's time for a family reunion. No, it was time to turn up the heat.

V 9-17 "And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10: And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

11: We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

12: And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13: And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

14: And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye

are spies:

15: Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16: Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.

17: And he put them all together into ward three days."

This wasn't revenge. It was a *process*.

He must turn up the heat, and leave the results to God.

He couldn't reveal himself, but at the same time, he longed for news of home.

As it turned out, and maybe as Joseph planned, his interrogation confirmed the fact that his father and his brother were still OK.

However, his questions turned up some other news.

His brothers were still living a lie.

When it came to the subject of Joseph, they simply said, "**and one is not.**"

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Admittedly, Joseph's treatment was very harsh, but his purpose wasn't revenge. He must bring them to repentance before he could make himself known to them as their deliverer.

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Down through the ages, Israel has endured many trials and persecutions also, but Christ hasn't forsaken them.

Like Joseph, He is leading them to
repentance, and someday He will reveal
Himself as their Deliverer.

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V 17 **"And he put them all together into ward
three days."**

Not only did Joseph speak roughly to them,
but he put them into prison.

And that was exactly what they needed.

During those three days of imprisonment,
they had a lot of time to do some
serious thinking about their sin.

And we must also remember that they didn't
have any idea how long they would be in
there.

They had cared so little about Joseph's
welfare when they sent him off to
Egypt. Now they must concern

themselves with the welfare of their loved ones.

If the Governor kept them in prison too long, their sons and daughters would starve to death before they could get back.

It was a sobering thought.

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And what about the times of captivity that Israel has endured down through the ages?

Did God enjoy putting them into prison any more than Joseph enjoyed this process?

No, He didn't.

And He didn't enjoy wounding them either.

As Hosea 5:14-15 says, **"For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and**

none shall rescue him.

15: I will go and return to my place,
till they acknowledge their offence,
and seek my face: in their affliction
they will seek me early."

And then in Chapter 6:1 of this same book,
we find that it was all worthwhile.

"Come, and let us return unto the LORD:
for he hath torn, and he will heal us;
he hath smitten, and he will bind us
up."

During this Age of Grace, the nation of
Israel has endured great sorrow, and as
yet they do not recognize their *Joseph*,
their Saviour.

And there is still a great time of trouble
ahead known as the Time of Jacob's
Trouble, but God will bind them up.

Yes, the famine will be long and hard, but
it will bring repentance and healing.

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So in spite of his love, Joseph's brethren
must suffer until their hearts would be
broken.

V 17-20 **"And he put them all together into
ward three days.**

**18: And Joseph said unto them the third
day, This do, and live; for I fear God:**

**19: If ye be true men, let one of your
brethren be bound in the house of your
prison: go ye, carry corn for the
famine of your houses:**

**20: But bring your youngest brother
unto me; so shall your words be
verified, and ye shall not die. And
they did so."**

Upon their release, the conditions of their trial were set.

Instead of sending one of them back to get Benjamin and keeping the rest in prison, he only held one of them and released the others.

Actually that's the only way there would be enough of them to carry back sufficient corn for the family.

So that was better, but it was still a serious business.

They were facing a charge of spying, with the distinct possibility of execution.

That's what usually happens to spies, you know.

And I'm sure they noticed Joseph's rather pointed words, "**This do, and live.**"

Also in V 20, Joseph said "--**bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your**

words be verified, and ye shall not die."

Yes, they must persuade their father to produce Benjamin, or they were dead men.

However, Joseph had left them an out, and I am sure this was a test also.

Ten of them had been allowed to leave.

Wouldn't it be easier, and certainly a lot safer, to *forsake* their brother?

Once they were in Canaan, there was no need to worry about the possibility of execution.

Yes, this was a real test of family loyalty. Of course, they didn't know who would be the odd man out.

Joseph hadn't told them who would be staying behind.

What a spot they were in, and the pressure
was almost unbearable!

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And then it hit them!

V 21-24 **"And they said one to another, We
are verily guilty concerning our
brother, in that we saw the anguish of
his soul, when he besought us, and we
would not hear; therefore is this
distress come upon us.**

**22: And Reuben answered them, saying,
Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not
sin against the child; and ye would not
hear? therefore, behold, also his blood
is required.**

**23: And they knew not that Joseph
understood them; for he spake unto them
by an interpreter.**

24: And he turned himself about from

them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

No, Joseph wasn't enjoying this at all! In fact, he was so overcome by grief that he left the room for a while.

However, drying his eyes and putting on a stern face, he **"took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes."**

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We don't really know why he chose Simeon. However, knowing his character, and his part in the massacre of Shechem, he might have been the ringleader in the plot against Joseph.

And even on his deathbed his father was convinced of his treachery--**"Simeon and**

**Levi are brethren; instruments of
cruelty are in their habitations."**

So probably Joseph thought that Simeon would profit the most from a longer imprisonment.

And I'm sure his brothers noted the fact that the Governor just happened to pick the cruellest man among them for this special privilege.

Of course they were convinced that it was God's judgment, but still, this man seemed to know far more than any stranger should.

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V 25-28 **"Then Joseph commanded to fill their
sacks with corn, and to restore every
man's money into his sack, and to give
them provision for the way: and thus
did he unto them.**

26: And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

27: And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth.

28: And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?"

No doubt they were almost home when they discovered the money.

The trip from Egypt to Hebron was a long one, being 250 miles or more, and normally they would have been dipping into their supply of grain from the very start.

However, V 25 gives us a very important piece of information.

Joseph had given "**them provision for the way.**"

That means it wouldn't be necessity to open their sacks until that extra supply ran out.

Why would they use the corn they had paid for when they had free food for themselves and their animals?

This seemed very generous on Joseph's part, but I think he had his own reasons.

They wouldn't need to open their sacks until their extra provisions ran out, so they wouldn't discover the money until they were nearly home.

If they had found the money right away, rather than about three weeks later,

they could have returned it
immediately.

However, by the time they discovered it,
they would certainly look like a bunch
of thieves that had made a clean
getaway.

You can imagine their total confusion.

They were doing their best to prove that
they weren't spies, and now they looked
like thieves!

They just couldn't understand how a simple
thing like buying corn could get them
into so much trouble. **"What is this
that God hath done unto us?"**

Yes, this solitary bag of money had turned
their world upside down!

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Certainly God's Chosen People must have
cried out **"What is this that God hath**

done unto us?" many times over the centuries, but someday they will understand.

Someday they will recognize their *Joseph*, their Saviour, and they will know the meaning of their afflictions.

As David said in Psalm 119:67, "**Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.**"

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V 29-34 "**And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,**

30: The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

31: And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies:

32: We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

33: And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

34: And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land."

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Well, it was bad news, but not nearly as bad as it would get.

Having given their father an account of their most unusual and disturbing journey, they began to empty their sacks into the storehouse, and guess what they found?

V 35 **"And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."**

Jacob was very upset, and in no condition to believe their wild tales.

Many years ago, they had lied to him about Joseph and got away with it.

This time they had told the absolute truth, but their father was suspicious.

No, Jacob really didn't trust them anymore.

V 36-38 **"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my**

children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

37: And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38: And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Notice Jacob's words--"**Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not.**"

Apparently Jacob had come to the conclusion that somehow, he wasn't sure how, his

sons were responsible for Joseph's death.

Over the years, they had built up a reputation for dishonesty that was hard to shake.

And because their father didn't believe their story, which this time was absolutely true, they couldn't get the proof they needed to convince the Governor that they weren't liars.

Yes, lying does have its consequences.

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So again they avoided Egypt like the plague. But God's special device to bring them back was working very well, and soon necessity would drag them back.

Yes, in spite of the impasse between themselves and their father, and in spite of their fear of the Governor, a

second visit to Egypt would be absolutely necessary.

Genesis 43:1-2 **"And the famine was sore in the land.**

2: And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food."

As far as Jacob was concerned, the subject was closed. Benjamin was not going to Egypt.

However, if they showed up without him, their whole case would be lost.

They needed a spokesman that had enough clout to convince their father that Benjamin simply had to go.

But who could they pick? Joseph was the only one he had ever trusted.

It was a hard decision.

Reuben had lost all credibility, both with his father and his brothers.

In spite of the fact that he was the eldest, he had not even been able to stand up to his brothers and deliver Joseph.

And then there was that nasty business about Bilhah that he could never live down.

No, Reuben was definitely not the man for the job.

The next eldest was Simeon, but, of course, he was cooling his heels in Egypt, and he wouldn't have been a good choice anyway, so that left Levi.

But Levi wasn't the right man to convince their father of anything.

He and Simeon had slaughtered all the men in Shechem, and their father had never forgiven them.

So that left Judah, the fourth in line.

However, as we have already seen in Chapter 38, Judah was no angel either.

All these men were sons of Leah, and all of them had a very bad reputation.

Yes, old Laban had given Jacob a peck of trouble when he tricked him into marrying poor Leah.

However, in spite of everything, it appears they chose Judah.

And you know what? Judah turned out to be a winner!

V 3-5 **"And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.**

4: If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food:

5: But if thou wilt not send him, we

will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."

Well, Jacob had his back up against the wall, and he didn't like it.

But this time, he wasn't calling the shots. Far off in Egypt, the Governor's word had prevailed over his.

V 6-7 "And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?

7: And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?"

Well, Jacob was pretty peevish, but he finally had to admit that it really wasn't his sons' fault.

And even though they had always caused him a lot of trouble, he certainly didn't want to take the chance of having them executed as spies.

If he didn't send Benjamin, they would have no proof of their innocence, and even if he didn't arrest them, the Governor had warned them that **"Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you."**

So the very best they could expect was to be left standing out on the street until they starved, or went back home with empty sacks.

Yes, as a good father, he was concerned for their personal welfare. After all,

that's why he had sent Joseph to check
on them in the first-place.

And not only that, if they died, what would
become of the Abrahamic Covenant?

How would God fulfill His promise to make
him a great nation?

His grandsons would still be alive, but how
long could they last without food?

In fact, how long would it be before they
all starved?

Oh, if this famine would only end,
everything would be all right!

Jacob's mind had been in turmoil for months.

But, you know, I think a little shaft of
light was dawning in his soul.

In spite of the blame game he had been
playing, I think he was slowly
regaining his faith.

When Joseph died, or at least when he
thought he had died, Jacob's heart had
died also--"**I will go down into the
grave unto my son mourning.**"

But now, for the first time in ages, the
Holy Spirit was calling him *Israel*
again.

Did you notice that?

V 6 "**And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so
ill with me--.**"

V 8 "**And Judah said unto Israel his father.**"

And again in V 11 "**And their father Israel
said unto them, If it must be so now,
do this--.**"

He hadn't been called Israel since the time
he had sent young Joseph to check on
his brethren, and that was way back in
Genesis 37:13.

I think the Holy Spirit is telling us that
Israel had turned a corner spiritually.

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And not only that, but I think something had
happened to Judah also.

In spite of his unsavoury past that we read
about in Chapter 38, Judah was now
showing real dedication and wisdom.

V 8-10 **"And Judah said unto Israel his
father, Send the lad with me, and we
will arise and go; that we may live,
and not die, both we, and thou, and
also our little ones.**

**9: I will be surety for him; of my hand
shalt thou require him: if I bring him
not unto thee, and set him before thee,
then let me bear the blame for ever:**

**10: For except we had lingered, surely
now we had returned this second time."**

Not only was Judah willing to put his own life on the line, but his appeal made sense.

If they didn't return to Egypt very soon everyone would die, including Benjamin. So Judah was doing much better, and I think Israel had put his **"all these things are against me"** syndrome behind him, and was using a little faith.

Oh, he was still fearful, but he was willing to commit his children into the Lord's hands, and simply take the consequences.

But he was still going to put his best foot forward.

V 11 **"And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a**

present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

12: And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

13: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:

14: And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Good for you, Jacob! With an attitude like that, God is going to work wonders in your life.

And you know what? He did!