

SESSION 5

JOSEPH

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I. PRAYER

II. PANORAMA TIMELINE (Movements #2)

"Patriarchs"



III. "TOLEDOT" OUTLINE: Genesis

Creation (1:1-2:3)

1. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)

2. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)

3. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)

4. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)

5. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)

6. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)

7. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)

8. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)

9. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)

10. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

IV. PATRIARCHS

Abraham	Issac	Jacob	Joseph
12	25	27	37
25	26	36	50

V. LIFE OF JOSEPH: (Genesis 37-50)

Joseph

Youthful Arrogance	Rise to Prominence	Family Reunion	Final Days of Jacob
... Dreams	... Potiphar's house to	... 1st Journey	... Jacob to Egypt
... Sold to slavery to Midianites to Potiphar	... Pharaoh's prison to	... 2nd Journey	... Blessing of Joseph's son's
	... Pharaoh's favor	... Joseph's test and revelation	... Blessing of Jacob's sons
			... Death of Jacob
37	39	42	46
38	41	45	50

VI. **LIFE OF JOSEPH:** Exposition

The life of Joseph is prominent in the 10th “toledot” of Genesis. But this section of Genesis focuses also on the conflicts and the transformations of the sons of Jacob. “The emphasis now shifts from Jacob’s personal struggles to receive the blessing promised to Abraham and Isaac, to the events in Jacob’s life that lead up to the formation of Israel as a nation” (Aalders quoted by Constable, 228). The sovereignty of God and the choices of human responsibility highlight much of the story.

A. **Youthful Arrogance** (Gen. 37-38)

GENESIS 37:2b-4

“Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.”

- Joseph at 17 years tends the family flocks. He works closely with his brothers (born of the handmaidens, Bilhah and Zilpah).
- Joseph is hated (resented) by his brothers:
 - (1) He gave his father a “bad report” about the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah;
 - (2) He was the favored, more-loved son of Jacob;
 - (3) He received preferential treatment (ornamental robe).
- The household of Jacob has previously been demonstrated as a dysfunctional clan. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah and Joseph more than his brothers. Simeon and Levi have enacted murderous revenge (Gen. 34), Reuben has slept with his father’s concubine (Bilhah) which, according to the custom of the day, was an act of seizing his father’s role of leadership. The family is in desperate need of significant life-change.

1. **Dreams** (37-5-11)

GENESIS 37:5-8

“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, ‘Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.’ ⁸ His brothers said to him, ‘Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?’ And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.”

INSIGHT

"Joseph is depicted as morally good but immature and bratty. His tattling, and robe parading inflames his brothers' hatred against him."
(Waltke, *Genesis*, 498)

- a. Dreams were a common, ancient means by which divine communication and prediction could be given. This is the first dream in the Bible whereby God does not speak.
- b. The agricultural dream clearly sees the older brothers subservient to the younger, Joseph. Note that this dream predicts a later time when the brothers would come before Joseph for grain/bread (in Egypt – 42:1-6).
- c. The dream increases the brothers' resentment. They clearly see the implication... "reign over us" and "rule us."

Joseph's second and confirmatory dream (37:9-11) envisioned the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down before him. The implication was clear to all: Joseph sees the entire family bowing to his authority. The brothers were "jealous" (see Rachel's jealousy in 30:1); Jacob pondered the matter.

2. Sold to slavery (37:12-36)

The entire narrative is one of deceit, a deeply ingrained family trait. The selling of Joseph is covered by lying to the patriarchal father; Reuben attempts to deceive his brothers in order to save Joseph's life.

- a. Near Shechem (12-17a)
The brothers minus Joseph are shepherding near Shechem (the site of the rape of Dinah and bloody aftermath some two years previous – Gen. 34). Jacob sends Joseph to check on the welfare of the brothers and the flocks. Providentially Joseph meets a man who knows that the group has moved the herd to Dothan, about 13 miles northwest of Shechem.
- b. At Dothan (17b-20)

GENESIS 37:17b-20)

"So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan.

¹⁸ But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.¹⁹ 'Here comes that dreamer!' they said to each other. ²⁰ 'Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams.'"

- (1) The plot to kill Joseph begins upon seeing the "dreamer" in his privileged coat.
- (2) The bitterness of the brothers has become murderous. Envy appears to reign within their resentment.

PROVERBS 14:30

"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

PROVERBS 27:4

"Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?"

JAMES 3:16

"For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

- (3) Reuben (the firstborn, the rash usurper of his father's leadership—recall the Bilhah affair – 35:22)—pleads for his brother's life. He as the firstborn takes the role of his father in his absence. His plan is to deceive the brothers and later retrieve his younger brother to take him safely home (37:21-22).
 - (4) Ishmaelite traders (also called Midianite) provide not only a solution to getting rid of the troublesome brother, but also a profit as Judah suggests, "Come, let's sell him..." (37:25-27).
 - (5) The sale is completed; the robe of Joseph is torn and dipped in goat's blood. The brothers are prepared to take it as a ruse to father Jacob. Deceit upon deceit continues.
- c. Back to Hebron (32-36)
- The brothers return to Hebron with the bloodied ornamental robe.

GENESIS 37:34-35

"Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. 'No,' he said, 'I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.' So his father wept for him."

- (1) Jacob had earlier deceived his father by impersonation with goatskins. Now, he will be the object of deception by goat's blood and a robe.
- (2) Jacob's grief is profound:
 - (a) "tore his clothes"
 - (b) "put on sackcloth"
 - (c) "mourned...many days"
- (3) Hypocritically, Jacob's sons attempt to comfort him to no avail.
- (4) Meanwhile, the Midianite traders have sold Joseph to Potiphar, the "captain of the guard," an official of Pharaoh in Egypt.

3. Judah and Tamar Story (Gen. 38)

The Biblical narrator has sent Joseph to Egypt by Midianite traders. Joseph has been purchased by a high official of Pharaoh's court (37:36). Now, the author-compiler of Genesis relates a story of a different son of Jacob, that is, Judah (the fourth son of Jacob by Leah). Recall that this is the "toledot" of Jacob and while Joseph is a key player, other sons' stories will also be narrated. The family is fractured and dysfunctional and in great need of familial love and mature faith.

a. Early in the story (about 20 years' duration) (38:1-11)

GENESIS 38:1

"At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah."

- (1) Judah marries a Canaanite woman (unnamed). Jacob's influence over his sons' marriages is far less than grandfather Abraham or father Isaac. These fathers had feared the destructive influence of the Canaanites. Jacob has less and less control over the fractured family.
- (2) Judah has three sons: Er, Onan, Shelah (38:3-5). Er and Onan are described as "wicked in the Lord's sight" and are put to death by the Lord. This is the first explicit account that attributes death to the Lord's hand of discipline.
- (3) Er had grown up, married Tamar, but had no children at the time of Er's death (by the hand of the Lord).

GENESIS 38:8

"Then Judah said to Onan, 'Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.'"

- (1) This Near Eastern custom was later incorporated into Biblical law and practice. It continued even to the time of Jesus (Mk. 12:18-25).

DEUTERONOMY 25:5-6

"If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."

RUTH 4:5, 10, 17

"Then Boaz said, 'On the day you buy the land from Naomi, you also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the dead man's widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with

his property.' ... I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from his hometown. Today you are witnesses!' ...The women living there said, 'Naomi has a son!' And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David."

- (2) Onan was willing to lie with his brother's widow (Tamar) but not to produce offspring for her inheritance. By deceptively refusing to do so he would gain one-half of his father's inheritance (rather than one-third). As a result he was judged wicked and put to death also by the Lord.
- (3) Shelah, the third son of Judah, would be next in line to perform the duty of producing offspring for Tamar. Judah urges Tamar to live as a widow in her father's house until Shelah grows up (38:11). This is a deception; Judah has no intentions in arranging this at a later date.

b. After a long time (38:12-30)

The phrase "after a long time" provides a time marker for the conclusion to the Judah/Tamar story. The wife of Judah dies (38:12). Tamar recognizes that Judah has no intentions of providing a son for her by his son, Shelah, or by his own body (later Hittite and Middle Assyrian laws permitted the father to bear offspring for the widow if a son was not available). She takes off her widow's clothes and dresses as a common prostitute to attract Judah's interest.

GENESIS 38:15-16a

"When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, 'Come now, let me sleep with you.'"

- (1) Tamar has refused to remarry a Canaanite. She is faithful to her dead husband's inheritance rights and is determined to have children in the place of Er (firstborn of Judah).
- (2) Judah has been a deceptive father-in-law. He has not given his third son (Shelah) to Tamar to produce an offspring. Seeing the "prostitute," he acts to fulfill his own lust and bargains with the veiled Tamar.
- (3) Tamar shrewdly requests a pledge of future payment. She asks for Judah's "seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand" (38:18). Judah sleeps with Tamar and Tamar becomes pregnant.

"After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again" (38:19).

GENESIS 38:20

“Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her.”

- (1) Judah sends the payment of a young goat to the supposed prostitute but she cannot be found. The goat is taken by a friend; Judah may be too embarrassed to do the deed himself.
- (2) Others consulted do not know or recall a “shrine prostitute” beside the road at Enaim. When told, Judah is in a predicament. “Judah is like a reputable gentleman who unwittingly ‘loses’ his credit card in a brothel” (Waltke, *Genesis*, 513).

c. About three months later

GENESIS 38:24

“About three months later Judah was told, ‘Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.’”

- (1) Judah’s true colors and lack of concern for his daughter-in-law are uncovered. Tamar’s supposed crime of “prostitution” carries a death penalty, one Judah is eager to enforce.
- (2) Tamar sends the “seal and cord and staff” to her father-in-law with the message: “I am pregnant by the man who owns these” (38:25).
- (3) Judah owns up to his sin (lit. “she is righteous, not I”). Tamar has fought for her late husband’s rights.
- (4) Twins are born to Tamar and are named Perez and Zerah. During the birth Zerah’s hand reaches out and is pronounced the first-born by tying a scarlet thread to his hand. However, he drew his hand back in and Perez was born followed by Zerah. Once again in patriarchal history there is the birth/struggle of twins (cf. 25:23).
- (5) Perez (technically the younger) will receive the rights and blessings of the first-born. Perez will be the descendant in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:3; Lk. 3:33).

B. Rise to Prominence (Gen. 39-41)

The story-line of Joseph continues after the interlude concerning Judah. The reader’s question is whether or not the Lord will be faithful to the dream-prophecies. Each scene/crisis will reveal further a character trait of nobility.

1. Potiphar's house (39:1-20)

a. Prosperity in Potiphar's house (1-6)

GENESIS 39:2-4

"The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴ Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned."

- (1) "The LORD was with Joseph" occurs four times in the chapter (2, 3, 21, 23). It explains how a Hebrew can find success in an Egyptian official's home. God had also promised in similar fashion to be with Isaac and Jacob (26:3, 24, 28; 28:15, 20).
- (2) Joseph was not assigned to the fields. He was to be a servant "in the house" of his master. This would allow Potiphar to observe and reward Joseph's fidelity and abilities. Joseph became Potiphar's "attendant," then was put "in charge of his (Potiphar's) household."
- (3) As a result of Joseph's presence the Lord also blessed the household of the Egyptian official (39:5). Waltke (*Genesis*, 520) notes, "The Lord's power overflows through the Semitic Joseph to the Hamitic Egyptians just as the Lord had promised Abraham (see 12:3)."

b. Temptation in Potiphar's house (7-10)

GENESIS 39:6b-7

"Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷ and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!'"

- (1) Only two men in the Hebrew Bible are described in outward, appealing form, Joseph and David. The description here of Joseph sets the stage for the approach of Potiphar's wife (unnamed in the Scriptures).
- (2) "After a while" indicates that the sexual tension within the woman has been building. She is enslaved to her lust for a Hebrew slave, thus "Come to bed with me."
- (3) Joseph refuses on three grounds (39:8-9):
 - To do so would be a breach of trust with his master (8)
 - To do so would be a moral violation against his master (9)
 - To do so would be a sin against God (9)

GENESIS 39:10

“And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.”

c. Disgrace in Potiphar’s house (11-20)

GENESIS 39:11-12

“One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside.¹² She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.”

- (1) Potiphar’s wife seizes a moment when the house is empty save Joseph about “his duties.” Again, she insists that he sleep with her. As a slave (even trusted slave), Joseph was bound to obey his mistress. As a trustworthy attendant, he was morally bound to refuse. As a son of the covenant with God, he was spiritually bound to not sin. Compare this story to the previous one where Judah pursues immorality.

2 TIMOTHY 2:22

“Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

- (2) Joseph flees as Potiphar’s wife grabs his “cloak” (garment). The word for grab (“caught”) is a forceful one usually descriptive of masculine violence (cf. Deut. 22:28).
- (3) Potiphar’s wife has acted rashly and must cover her tracks:
 - By calling the “household servants” together to hear her fabricated story against the “Hebrew slave” (39:13-15).
 - By telling her husband of the “Hebrew” slave’s unwanted advances (“make sport of me” could mean to deride or put down, but in the context of the story, it has a sexual connotation) (39:16-18).

GENESIS 39:19-20a

“When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger.²⁰ Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.”

- (1) Potiphar’s wife pushes her husband’s “buttons” by referring to Joseph not by name but in a derisive way, “Your” slave.
- (2) Potiphar “burned with anger.” The text does not specify against whom. Does he believe the story of his wife? Does he think Joseph capable of such an act?

- (3) Potiphar put Joseph in prison. The crime of attempted rape was a capital offense. Potiphar only has Joseph placed where “the king’s prisoners were confined.” Does this suggest that Potiphar may not altogether believe his wife’s version of the supposed incident?

2. Pharaoh’s prison (39:20b – 40:23)

- a. Same story, different verse: parallels

Joseph and Potiphar	Joseph in Prison
Joseph blessed in Potiphar’s house (39:2-6)	Joseph blessed in Pharaoh’s prison (39:20a-23)
Joseph mistreated: unwanted attention (39:7-19)	Joseph mistreated: unwanted neglect (40:14-15, 23)
Joseph placed in prison (39:1, 20)	Joseph remains (left) in prison (40:23)

- b. Blessing in prison (39:20b-23)

GENESIS 39:20b-23

“But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹ the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²² So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³ The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.”

- (1) Note again the recurring phrase, “the Lord was with him” (39:21, 23). Regardless of Joseph’s situation, he continues to be blessed of God. The Lord has shown “kindness” (Hb. *hesed* = loyalty love) to Joseph.
- (2) Like Potiphar the warden placed Joseph in an important administrative role. This will provide the setting to the “Cupbearer/Baker Saga.”

- c. The cupbearer and the baker (40:1-23)

GENESIS 40:1-4a

“Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³ and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴ The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.”

- (1) "Some time later" suggests that Joseph has been in prison for quite a while. The total length of time is 13 years; Joseph was 17 years of age when sold into slavery (37:2) and 30 years when he began serving in Pharaoh's house (41:46). To this point he has been in prison for about ten years or so.
- (2) "Offended" (lit. sinned) speaks of palace intrigue, perhaps an aborted attempt on Pharaoh's life. Since cupbearers and bakers both attended to the "king of Egypt's" food, perhaps the intrigue implicated both men. Yet, due to uncertainty of actual events, the actual guilt of one or the other is in doubt. In time one will be acquitted; one will be hanged.

GENESIS 40:6-8

"When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, 'Why do you look so sad today?' ⁸ 'We both had dreams,' they answered, 'but there is no one to interpret them.' Then Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.'"

- (1) The chief cupbearer and the baker both have had troubling dreams.
- (2) Joseph acknowledges that the interpretations of dreams "belong to God" (cf. Dan. 2:28). Apparently this gift has been given to Joseph as a part of his being blessed by God.
- (3) The cupbearer's dream was interpreted by Joseph to mean that in three days the cupbearer would be restored to his former place (40:9-13). Joseph asks the man to remember him and use his influence on his behalf (40:14-15).
- (4) The baker's dream was interpreted by Joseph to mean that in three days he would not be restored to his former position, but rather hanged (presumably for the crimes against Pharaoh).

GENESIS 40:23

"The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."

- (1) Two years will lapse until the cupbearer remembers Joseph. (cf. 41:1)
- (2) Perhaps this ingratitude foreshadows a future time when "a new king who did not know Joseph came to power in Egypt" (Ex. 1:8). Joseph's future benefits to the Egyptian people will, like the cupbearer's present forgetfulness, eventually fade.

3. Pharaoh's favor (41:1-57)

a. Pharaoh's dreams (1-40)

After two more years in prison for Joseph, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams (41:1-7).

GENESIS 41:8

"In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him."

- (1) Pharaoh's first action is to call for the "magicians and wise men" of Egypt or skilled magicians, ones practiced in magic and soothsaying (cf. Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7). For all of their learned art, none could interpret the dreams.
- (2) The cupbearer remembered his "shortcomings" (lit. sins) and related to Pharaoh his experience with Joseph some two years earlier.

GENESIS 41:14-16

"So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. ¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.' ¹⁶ 'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.'"

- (1) Egyptians were clean-shaven. Joseph must be made presentable to meet with Pharaoh.
- (2) Joseph disavows any human ability to interpret dreams. But God can (and will) reveal the meaning that Pharaoh "desires," not to say that the dream will be pleasant to the king but it will be factual, true, right (NLT: "will set you at ease").
- (3) Both dreams are characterized by contrasts:
 - (a) Dream #1: fat and sleek cows vs. scrawny, very ugly and lean (41:17-21)
 - (b) Dream #2: seven heads of full and good grain vs. seven heads withered and lean (41:22-24)
- (4) Joseph interprets both dreams as having one meaning: seven years of abundance will be followed by seven years of famine (41:25-32). The assurance of this correct interpretation is enhanced by Joseph's words:
 - "God has revealed" (25)
 - "God has shown" (28)
 - "firmly decided by God" (32)
 - "God will do it soon" (32)

GENESIS 41:33

“And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.”

- (1) Joseph further counseled Pharaoh to prepare for the coming famine by appointing a kind of prime minister (vizier) and others (commissioners) to help him. Taking a fifth of each abundant year’s harvest and storing it would protect against the coming years of famine.
- (2) Pharaoh agrees and believes that Joseph is just the man.

GENESIS 41:39-40

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.’”

b. Joseph’s position (41-57)

GENESIS 41:41-43

“So Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’ ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, ‘Make way!’ Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt...”

- (1) Joseph is installed in his new position as “second-in-command.” He is given Pharaoh’s signet ring whereby documents can be officially validated.
- (2) To complete his new standing Pharaoh also gives Joseph a new name (new identity), Zaphenath-Paneah (perhaps, “God speaks and lives”) and a priest’s daughter to be his wife.
- (3) Joseph is 30 years old when he begins his new duties (41:46). Before the years of famine come, two sons are born to Joseph and Asenath: Manasseh and Ephraim (41:51-92).
- (4) When the years of famine arrive,
“...all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world...” (41:57).

The stage is now set for a fateful reunion (so, Genesis 42).

C. **Family Reunion** (Genesis 42-45)

To this point the narrative seems to be about Joseph. While certainly a key player in the drama, beneath the story-line is the hidden, sovereign hand of God. He equips Joseph with the ability to interpret dreams (41:16), gifts him with supernatural wisdom (41:33) and discernment (41:38), and enables him to face all circumstances with integrity and forthrightness. Upon interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph has strongly acknowledged that the matter (even life and the course of human history) has been "firmly decided by God...." (41:32). God's sovereign hand will continue to guide as the story begins to rise to its crescendo.

1. First Journey – without Benjamin (42:1-38)

GENESIS 42:1-4

"When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, 'Why do you just keep looking at each other?' ² He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.' ³ Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him."

- a. The famine extends beyond the borders of Egypt. Jacob, the patriarch of the entire clan, admonishes his sons to travel to Egypt to buy grain.
- b. Ten brothers make the trek (Benjamin, the second son of Rachel and Jacob's favored son will not accompany the band).

Genesis 42:7-24 is characterized by a chiastic structure that captures the drama of the first encounter of disguised Joseph and his ten brothers (who do not recognize him) (Ross, 649).

Note the chiasm which follows:

A Joseph knew his brothers and remembered (7-9^a)

B Joseph accused them of being spies, but they explained their situation (9^b-13)

C Joseph set out a test whereby they could prove they were honest men (14-16)

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D Joseph put them into prison (17)

C' Joseph set out a new test for the brothers to prove they were honest (18-20)

B' The brothers confessed their guilt concerning their brother, and Reuben accused them of their fault (21-22)

A' Joseph understood and wept (23-24)

Note:

- a. Joseph looks, speaks, acts like an Egyptian official. His brothers do not recognize him (20 years have passed).
- b. Seeing his brothers bow before his authority, Joseph recalls the dream of many years earlier, namely that his brothers would bow down before him (37:5-11).
- c. Joseph fabricates "tests" to ascertain whether or not his brothers have changed over the years. He demands that the youngest brother be brought to him (42:18-20).
- d. Not realizing that Joseph could understand their language, the brothers lament that this trouble was rooted in their harsh, brutal treatment of their "supposedly" dead brother. Reuben upbraids the brothers as well. This remorse will lead to repentance. Joseph is clearly directing the story to test his brothers.

GENESIS 42:25-28

"Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them,²⁶ they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. ²⁷ At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ 'My silver has been returned,' he said to his brothers. 'Here it is in my sack.' Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, 'What is this that God has done to us?'"

- a. Finding their silver in the grain sacks creates massive apprehension in the hearts of the nine brothers (recall that

Simeon was left in custody in Egypt until they returned with Benjamin – 42:24).

- b. Apparently Joseph is testing their loyalty and honesty. Will they actually return with the youngest brother? Will they leave a brother to permanently remain in prison while they stay safely at home? The test will expose the character of the brothers.

GENESIS 42:29

“When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them.”

- a. The brothers related in detail and in full honesty the troubling encounter with the Egyptian official (Joseph).
- b. When Jacob heard that Simeon was in effect a hostage, he bemoaned the loss of three sons: Joseph, Simeon, and Benjamin should they take him back to Egypt (42:36).
- c. Reuben offers his own sons in exchange for Simeon and Benjamin should they not return (42:37). The offer may have been well-intentioned but carried little weight.
- d. Jacob is unwilling to let Benjamin go (42:38).

2. Second Journey – with Benjamin (43:1-34)

- a. The brothers return to Egypt (1-14)

GENESIS 43:1-2

“Now the famine was still severe in the land. ² So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, ‘Go back and buy us a little more food.’”

- (1) The seven year famine continues (41:29-30, 57).
- (2) Jacob instructs his sons to return to Egypt to buy more food.
- (3) Judah reminds his father that they cannot go unless they have young Benjamin per the specific command of the Egyptian official (43:7).
- (4) Again, Judah speaks and takes on the leadership role. He agrees to bear the blame if the youngest is lost (43:8-10)
- (5) There is no other choice. The brothers must return or all will be lost (not to mention, Simeon, who still remains in prison). Jacob instructs the brothers to take a “gift” (i.e., a token of submission or respect). Plus, they are to return the silver found in their grain sacks as well as take more silver to purchase grain (43:11-12). Jacob despairs; Benjamin leaves with his brothers; another “surprise” awaits them.

b. Joseph receives his brothers (15-34)

GENESIS 43:15-16

“So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ‘Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon.’”

- (1) The brothers arrive in Egypt with gifts, double the amount of silver, and Benjamin.
- (2) Joseph instructs his household steward to prepare a noon banquet at his home. The brothers are “frightened” and fearful that the “silver incident” might lead to their destruction (43:17-18).
- (3) The brothers confess to the house steward their surprise (innocence) at finding the silver but assure the steward that it has been returned along with more to buy food (43:19-22).

GENESIS 43:23

“‘It’s all right,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them.”

- (4) Joseph arrives and the brothers bow down (43:26). During the noon meal, he converses with the anxious men:
 - (a) “How is your aged father?”
 - (b) “Is this your youngest brother?”
 - (c) “Serve the food.”
- (5) Joseph must hurriedly leave the banquet as his emotions overwhelm him at the sight of his younger brother (43:30). When Joseph was sold into slavery Benjamin would have been about a year old. Love for family is still strong in Joseph. What is it for his brothers?

GENESIS 43:32-34

“They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. ³³ The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴ When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.”

- (1) Joseph's exalted position separates him from the others at the feast.
- (2) The brothers are amazed at the seating order directed by their host; they are seated first-born to the youngest. All that Joseph has arranged is a test. Will he find sibling rivalry? Will they treat each other callously? All proceeds under Joseph's watchful eye.
- (3) Benjamin receives a five-fold portion from the table of Joseph, far beyond what was customary for a guest of honor.

PROVERBS 23:1-3 NLT

"While dining with a ruler,
 pay attention to what is put before you.
² If you are a big eater,
 put a knife to your throat;
³ don't desire all the delicacies,
 for he might be trying to trick you.

In other words, when eating with an important official, watch yourself. Curb your appetite ("knife to your throat"); don't be taken in by the "delicacies." You are being observed! ("deception may be involved").

3. Joseph's test (and revelation) (44:1-45:28)
 - a. The final test (44:1-34)
 - (1) The steward's test (1-13)

GENESIS 44:1-2

"Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: 'Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. ² Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain.' And he did as Joseph said."

- (a) One final test will determine the brothers' integrity.
- (b) All sacks will contain grain and silver, thus all will appear guilty. But the younger brother's sack will also contain Joseph's special cup (perhaps on display the night before). Will the brothers flee if given the chance or will they care for their younger brother's welfare (unlike the care they displayed to Joseph years earlier)?
- (c) The ruse works again. Silver is found in each man's sack. Benjamin's sack also has the cup (goblet) belonging to Joseph.

- (d) “At this, they tore their clothes” (44:13).
- Their actions are telling.
 - The brothers now demonstrate true remorse.
“The narrative conveys again the irony of deserved punishment for the offenders. They were guilty (before) but did not show remorse; now they are innocent and demonstrate deepest agony” (Mathews, 800).

(2) Joseph’s test of Judah’s integrity (14-34)

GENESIS 44:14-16

“Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, ‘What is this you have done? Don’t you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?’ ¹⁶ ‘What can we say to my lord?’ Judah replied. ‘What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.’”

- (a) Note that Judah’s name is listed two times in the passage (a third time in 44:18). Judah is the leader of the brotherly clan; he will speak for all.
- (b) Note also that the brothers “threw themselves to the ground” in reckless abandon and offered themselves as slaves to Joseph.
- (c) “God has uncovered your servants’ guilt” speaks not to stolen silver and cup, of which they rightly feign innocence, but to the deed of years ago with regard to their other brother (not to mention Tamar, Bilhah and Dinah “affairs”).
- (d) Joseph is prepared to allow the brothers to return to their home. Only the one (i.e., Benjamin) guilty of stealing the special cup must stay and be punished (44:17). Now, the trap has been sprung. What will Judah or the brothers choose to do?

GENESIS 44:18

“Then Judah went up to him and said: ‘Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.’”

- (a) Judah now begins his plea (the longest speech in Genesis).
- (b) “His test brought forth one of the truly great

speeches of history. Judah's speech was great because of its sincerity of purpose, its emotional depth, its altruistic concern, its revelation of the conversion of the speaker, and its substitutionary plea" (Vos, *Genesis*, 154).

- (c) Eleven times Judah refers to himself or his brothers as the Egyptian official's "servant" or "servants." Seven times (18-34) Joseph is deferentially referred to as "my lord." Fifteen times "father" is used in the conversation.
- (d) Judah rehearses the two journeys to Egypt to seek food. He recounts his previous conversations with the Egyptian official (Joseph). He emphasizes their father's (Jacob's) great love for his youngest son and that without this son, the father would die (44:18-32).

GENESIS 44:33-34

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴ How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."

- (a) Judah offers to substitute his life for the accused thief, Benjamin.
 - (b) The evidence of a changed life is complete. The test is over.
- b. The final revelation (45:1-28)
- The apex of the story of estranged brothers has finally arrived. What prophetic dreams foretold has now come to fruition. But the pathway has been anything but smooth. The tearful reconciliation is made possible by Joseph's careful testing of his brothers and sealed with the heartfelt, moving speech of Judah (44:18-34).

The time for Joseph's self-revelation is now.

GENESIS 45:1-2

"Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it."

- (1) The cool, professional veneer of an Egyptian vizier gives way to the passionate emotions of a long-lost brother.
- (2) The room is cleared of Egyptians; this tearful reunion is to be a family matter.

- (3) The effect on his brothers is astonishment and fear (45:3). Joseph comforts them with careful words.

GENESIS 45:4-5

“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt!’⁵ And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.”

- (4) Joseph also displays an acknowledgement that God’s guiding hand has always been at work:
- “God sent me ahead of you” (45:5)
 - “God sent me ahead of you” (45:7)
 - “not you who sent me here, but God (45:8)
 - “God has made me lord of all Egypt” (45:9)

GENESIS 45:14-15

“Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping.¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.”

- (1) Benjamin is Joseph’s only “full-blood” brother, the youngest and the one Joseph knows least.
- (2) Further, Joseph embraces and weeps with all his brothers. The reconciliation from Joseph’s point of view is complete. The brothers may still have lingering fear alongside their emotional embrace. Those brothers who formerly “could not speak a kind word to him” have changed, thus “Afterward his brothers talked with him” (45:15).

GENESIS 45:16-18

“When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased.¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Tell your brothers, “Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan,¹⁸ and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.”’”

- (1) Pharaoh’s gratitude to Joseph’s exemplary service to Egypt extends an invitation to bring the clan of Jacob to Egypt.
- (2) The “sons of Israel” return to their home to bring back Jacob (Israel) and the rest of the family (45:21).

- (3) Joseph gives to his brothers money and “new clothing,” a gesture of affection and esteem. Even as resentment over Joseph’s “richly ornamental robe” caused early discord, now the gift of clothing helps bridge the breach.
- (4) Joseph’s parting words are important: “Don’t quarrel (lit. “get excited”) on the way” (45:24).
 - The time for self-recrimination is over.
 - The time of receiving and giving forgiveness is at hand (“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other” – Eph. 4:32).
 - The time to transparently face their father with the true story is near.
- (5) Convincing Jacob that Joseph was alive was not immediate. However, presumably after the brothers detailed the full story, the patriarch can exclaim, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die” (45:28).

D. Final Days (Genesis 46-50)

1. Jacob to Egypt (Gen. 46:1 - 47:31)
 - a. Beginning of the journey (46:1-7)

GENESIS 46:1-4

“So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, ‘Jacob! Jacob!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. ³ ‘I am God, the God of your father,’ he said. ‘Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.’”

- (1) Beersheba is a southern marker of the Promised Land. Jacob pauses long enough to offer sacrifices. It seems as if he feels a need for permission to leave.
- (2) Similar to the Bethel dream (28:10-15), Jacob receives a confirming vision to not fear traveling to Egypt. Further, God promises to make Jacob’s clan “into a great nation there.” Egypt would be the place of Jacob’s death in the presence of his son, Joseph.
- (3) Assured by the revelatory dream, Jacob and family depart to Egypt (46:5-7).

b. Genealogy of the “sons of Israel” (46:8-27)

- (1) This genealogy demonstrates that God’s promise of numerous descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:6, et al.) is being fulfilled.
- (2) The family listings are arranged by the sons of Jacob by Leah (8-15), by Leah’s handmaiden, Zilpah (16-18), by Rachel (19-22) and by Rachel’s maid, Bilhah (23-25). Refer to the chart Session 4, p. 73.

GENESIS 46:26-27

“All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons’ wives—numbered sixty-six persons. ²⁷ With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all.”

c. Reunion of Jacob and Joseph (46:28 – 47:12)

GENESIS 46:28-29

“Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen, ²⁹ Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.”

- (1) Judah is sent ahead by Jacob. He is now the acknowledged leader of the sons. The reunion is reminiscent of an earlier encounter of Jacob and Esau (32:3).
- (2) Anxious Joseph races to meet his father at Goshen. Once again the “vizier” of Egypt is overcome with emotion. Jacob is now content enough to die, though in fact he will live in Egypt for 17 years longer.
- (3) Joseph coaches his brothers on proper protocol to meet Pharaoh (46:31-34). They were to honestly acknowledge that they were shepherds, though the occupation was “detestable” to Egyptian sensibilities. This (and their settlement in Goshen) will naturally keep the peoples apart.
- (4) Pharaoh meets five of Joseph’s brothers and the promises made are confirmed by Pharaoh (47:1-6). Next, Joseph presents his aged father to Pharaoh (47:7-10).

GENESIS 47:11-12

“So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. ¹² Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their children.”

d. The famine continues (47:13-31)

Five more years of famine has created desperate conditions in Canaan and Egypt. Joseph's management of the crisis increased Pharaoh's wealth and lands, while providing a means to survive for the hard-hit Egyptian populace. At the conclusion of this section (28-31) Jacob makes Joseph promise that upon his death, he will be taken back to the Promised Land to be buried at the cave of Machpelah near Hebron. Joseph agrees.

2. Blessing of Joseph's sons (48:1-22)

GENESIS 48:5-6

"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶ Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers."

- a. Joseph's sons receive the customary double-portion of blessing and inheritance rights (often the privilege of the first-born, but not always).
- b. Joseph, though a son of Jacob (Israel), will not be reckoned as a separate tribe. His sons will be considered sons (tribes) of Israel, thus the double-portion.

HEBREWS 11:21

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff."

- c. Israel (Jacob) formally and irrevocably blesses Manasseh (the older) and Ephraim indicating that the younger would be greater than the older.
- d. Israel (Jacob) also has a blessing for Joseph (48:15-16) and a final prophetic word. "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers" (48:21).

3. Blessing of Jacob's sons (49:1-33)

These blessings are binding, prophetic and irrevocable. Each of the twelve sons is blessed.

- a. Reuben, Simeon and Levi are bypassed for leadership of the clan of tribes. That privilege will be given to Judah.
- b. Judah's blessing

(1) GENESIS 49:8-12

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. ⁹ You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? ¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. ¹¹ He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. ¹² His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.”

(2) Judah will be the ruling tribe (“scepter”). From Judah will come the future King David, as well as the future Messiah.

- c. Joseph’s double blessing would be given to his two sons. When the later “12 tribes of Israel” are mentioned, Joseph’s name is not found, but is evident in his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Per Jacob’s earlier instructions to Joseph (47:28-31), Jacob announces his last request to be buried with his family (49:29-32).

“When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people.” (49:33).

4. Death of Jacob (50:1-26)

- a. Jacob’s burial (50:1-14)

(1) Joseph made preparations for his father to be embalmed, an act which would demonstrate dignity to Pharaoh and his court and one which would preserve the body for the journey home (1-3).

(2) Joseph received permission to take his father to his ancestral burial site. A delegation of Egyptian “dignitaries” and court officials accompanied Joseph and his brothers (4-11). The respect given to Joseph’s father bespeaks the honor and appreciation due to Joseph and his key role in the years of famine (the Egyptians: “You have saved our lives” – 47:25).

GENESIS 50:12-14

“So Jacob’s sons did as he had commanded them: ¹³ They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place

from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴ After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.”

b. Joseph’s reassurance (50:15-21)

Upon the death of the patriarch, Jacob, the uncertain brothers fear that Joseph will now possibly seek his revenge. They relate words attributed to their father, but in fact, probably were fabricated out of fear.

GENESIS 50:16-17

“So they sent word to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ “This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.” Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.’ When their message came to him, Joseph wept.”

Joseph’s brothers come to him, throw themselves down (again the prophetic dream is fulfilled), and pronounce, “we are your slaves” (50:18).

The reply of Joseph excludes character and spiritual insight.

GENESIS 50:19-21

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.”

- Don’t fear.
- God’s sovereign hand was at work.
- Our familial relationship has been restored.

c. Joseph’s death (50:22-26)

(1) Joseph lived for 110 years (22).

(2) Joseph required on oath that his “brothers” (probably relatives is best) take his bones back to the land of his fathers (24-25).

EXODUS 13:19

“Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, ‘God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place.’”

(3) Joseph was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt (26).

◆ *INSIGHT*

“The statement about the brothers’ evil plans and God’s good plans now opens up the inmost mystery of the Joseph story... Even where no man could imagine it, God had all the strings in his hands.”

(G. Von Rad quoted by Waltke, 623)

◆ *INSIGHT*

Joseph lived 110 years. Joshua, the successor to Moses also lived 110 years. Joseph and Joshua are the bookends of the long sojourn in Egypt. Matthews (931) observes, “The mention of ‘Egypt’ as the final word of Genesis prepares the way for the events that follow in the Book of Exodus. Although the promise to the patriarchs was not yet fulfilled, and indeed appeared very far from ever being accomplished, the Book of Genesis is calling on the reader to take up the faith of Joseph in the promises made to the Fathers.”