

STUDY NUMBER FOUR - Genesis 41:1-57

INTRODUCTION:

(When the Hurt Won't Go Away by Paul W. Powell)

Following World War II someone found scribbled on the walls of a cellar in Germany this great expression of undaunted faith:

I believe in the sun,
Even when it is not shining.
I believe in love,
Even when I don't feel it.
I believe in God,
Even when He is silent.

It was Rudyard Kipling who wrote the poetic piece "IF" --

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
If you can dream--and not make dreams your master;
If you can think--and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold On";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings--nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run--

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
and --which is more--you'll be a Man, my son!

In our last episode Joseph was still in prison. He had interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker, and the events following the dreams were exactly as Joseph had interpreted.

Joseph had asked that the cupbearer remember him when he was restored to his office, but the tragic words of the last verse of our study were "The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him."

v. 1 When two full years had passed,, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile,

Who cares to predict what Joseph's feelings might be now that he has been in prison probably a little better than three years. This prison term has been extended by two years that he certainly did not expect.

Have you ever noticed how slowly time passes when you are eagerly anticipating some joyous event. It seems like the clock stands still.

It has been 24 months--104 weeks--730 days--17,520 hours since we last saw Joseph.

What do you suppose the fellow prisoners had to say to Joseph as he endeavored to be triumphant in these circumstances?

(*When the Hurt Won't Go Away* by Paul W. Powell)

WHAT NOT TO SAY

A recent "Dear Abby" letter tells us what not to say. A lady wrote to Abby that her fourteen-year-old son had been killed in a tragic accident several months earlier and that she was just beginning to come out of the numbness and the shock. Throughout the ordeal, friends, family, and acquaintances had tried to comfort her. Some succeeded while others failed miserably. In her letter she said, "The following comments are words that did not help at all. I realize that everyone was trying to be kind, but there are certain words bereaved parents do not want to hear:

"1. *I know just how you feel. I lost my mother, father, husband, brother, sister, etc.* These words are so shallow to a parent who has lost a child. Unless they have suffered the loss of a child, there is no way on earth they can know how you feel.

"2. *It was God's will.* I am no more (or less) religious than the average person, but if it was God's will to take my son at fourteen and end his young life, then I want no part of a God who could be so cruel.

"3. *God needed him more than you did.* How inadequate that made me feel, as though something was lacking within myself. If I had needed him more, would he still be alive?

"4. *These things happen for a reason.* What reason? There is no reason good enough to explain why I have to suffer the loss of my child.

"You can have another child, or at least you have your other children. That is really cold and cruel. Children are individuals and no child can replace the child who has died.

"Now for some words that comforted me: a simple and heartfelt, *I'm so sorry.* No words were spoken, but they were there for me when I needed them.

Linda in Lancaster"

Joseph could be very depressed because as the scene of today's study opens, it has been 13 years since he has seen a familiar face.

(Depression, Finding Hope & Meaning in Life's Darkest Shadow by Don Baker and Emery Nester)

The screams of depression should never be allowed to drown out the whisperings of God's assurance of His love for us and his presence with us.

What was the cause of my depression?

I do not know.

I've told it like it happened. This story is true.

To attribute it all to Satan gives him more credit than he's due.

To blame it all on the physical discounts all the confused notions and feelings that were a very real part of me.

(cont.)

To blame it on pride, ambition, self-glory, seems reasonable but still incomplete.

It was probably all of these--and possibly even more.

What I do know is that a gracious God took His loving hand and placed in on the psyche of a very self-sufficient child, brought him to his knees, and caused him to be totally dependent on His adequacy for the remainder of his lifetime.

Don has learned through his agonizing experience that man's sufficiency is totally inadequate for the position of a servant. In his struggle and confusion, Don discovered that adequacy is found only in partnership with the Father. And Don never meets a depressed person in his pastoral counseling with whom he cannot identify, as he himself has known the lonely pain of that black hole.

The Don Baker of Hinson Memorial Baptist Church today is not the Don Baker of Hinson Memorial Baptist Church twenty-five years ago. The four years of depression and despair are part of God's conforming him to Christ's image.

Through this experience, He has equipped him for an unusual ministry. Don will never be the person he was before his agonizing experience. Nor will any of us, if we can see our experiences as part of the will of God for our lives.

The secret of victory in circumstances like this, when there is prolonged trial and no seeming explanation for the delay, is to keep Christ right at the center of your life and your thoughts.

Isaiah 26:3, 4

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

(Secrets for Successful Living by Robert D. Foster)

Jehovah is not the God of the perimeter. Either He is dead center in a man's life or there is trouble. Do you remember the geography of the camp layout for the children of Israel during those wandering years?

In the middle of the encampment was the tabernacle. In the middle of the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies. In the middle of the Holy of Holies was the altar. Between the outstretched wings of the cherubims on the altar was the "glory of the Lord." That was God! In the middle of everything . . . there He is!

The Lord never planned a life where He would be on the fringe. "In the midst" is the Bible's way of talking about the bull's-eye, the heart, the center and the core of living.

I take courage from this promise in knowing that He is "in the midst." Not sitting afar off . . . not watching from the throne room of heaven . . . but walking in the middle of the camp. Walking in step . . . feeling the pulse beat of every area of my life.

The three Hebrew lads of Daniel 3 knew the "proof of the puddin'". They found the Son of God walking in the midst of the fire with them. Peter in jail was not alone . . . the Lord was with him in the inner prison. Paul during the Mediterranean Sea storm sensed the Lord Almighty walking the decks with him. Men for thousands of years have gone to prayer and recognized His presence in their midst.

In the midst of fire, prison, storm or prayer meeting, "Christ, the secret center of our lives, will show Himself openly . . ."

Colossians 3:4

"The Lord in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

Zephaniah 3:17

The secret of success . . . Christ at the core of life.

(Building Life on the Promises by Robert D. Foster)

But, Christian peace is not found in a pill . . . not in prosperity . . . not in some place . . . rather in the Person and presence of God himself. He guards your inner citadel! Peace is a quiet, calm and unhurried resting upon your heavenly Father, and he is the author of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

This verse in Isaiah actually says in the Hebrew language: "Thou keepest in peace, peace; a peace that is perfect, without one ripple of anxiety, the mind of the one leaning hard upon Thee."

"Most men's lives are blown about by winds of circumstances, directed by gusts of passion, shaped by accidents, and are fragmentary and jerky, like some ship at sea with nobody at the helm, heading here and there, as the force of the wind or the flow of the current may carry them. If my life is to be steady, there must not only be a strong hand at the helm, but some outward object which shall be for me the point of aim and the harbor or rest."

"Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed;
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest."

"When two full years had passed"... I am sure it is called two full years so that we can understand the intensity of the trial that Joseph has faced these last two years in the prison.

"Pharaoh had a dream"... Joseph, it was not the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker as you had thought, but it is the dream of Pharaoh that is going to be significant in my great plan.

God's timing is always perfect.

John 13:1

Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Gal. 4:4, 5

But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Eccles. 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Pharaoh in his dream was standing by the Nile. This is the great river that flows into the Mediterranean Sea. It is the major source and water supply for the land of Egypt.

v. 2 when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.

The first scene that comes before Pharaoh as he is standing by the great River Nile is that out of that river there came up seven cows that were fat and in great shape, and they were grazing among the reeds along the river.

v. 3 After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank.

As soon as the seven sleek and fat cows had gotten up and were grazing among the reeds, there came seven other cows that were just the opposite. They were ugly and gaunt, and they came up out of the Nile and stood beside those who were fat and sleek on the riverbank.

v. 4 And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

All I can say at this point is that Pharaoh must have gone out for Mexican food the night before.

When he woke up, he felt guilty about it, so he went out to get a bowl of whole-grain wheat cereal before he went back to bed and asleep again.

v. 5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.

Now this dream is similar because of the dominance of the number seven. Instead of cows, we have seven heads of grain that are healthy and good and were growing on a single stalk.

v. 6 After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted--thin and scorched by the east wind.

The similarity again is that now there are seven other heads of grain that are thin and scorched.

v. 7 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

And I would think that he was not only glad to wake up, but glad to see morning after those two dreams.

v. 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.

Genesis 40:6

When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected, so he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

Here in this account in verse 8 Pharaoh's response to the dreams is that his mind was troubled. He knew there must be some significance to these dreams, and he was frustrated with trying to understand what they meant.

He sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt, and as he told them these two dreams, no one could interpret them for him.

v. 9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings.

Genesis 40:23

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

Isn't it amazing how God puts all the pieces together.

At this critical time for Pharaoh, the chief cupbearer remembers what happened a couple of years earlier when he was in prison. "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings."

What are those shortcomings? Well, they are probably three in number:

1. An ungrateful spirit
2. A selfish attitude
3. Forgetful of a favor

v. 10 Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.

Here the chief cupbearer recounts the experience a couple of years earlier to Pharaoh of what had happened, and that he and the baker were incarcerated in the house of the captain of the guard, Potiphar's place.

v. 11 Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

Here he tells Pharaoh of the fact that he and the chief baker both had dreams, and that each of these dreams had a meaning of its own.

v. 12 Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.

Now the cupbearer remembers Joseph. He is characterized as a young Hebrew who was a servant of Potiphar. They had told him their dreams and Joseph had interpreted them for them.

v. 13 And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged."

Not only does the chief cupbearer remember Joseph, but he also tells Pharaoh about the fact that the results of the dreams and the interpretations thereof turned out to be exactly as Joseph had said.

v. 14 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.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

People in great trials are apt to think that because they see no way of escape, their state is hopeless. They say with Job, "I am weary of life"; and, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15). But with our God nothing is impossible. Though human help may fail, "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (Isaiah 59:1). He will glorify Himself by rescuing us from our difficulties if only we call on Him. Our extremity is His opportunity, and "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Genesis 22:14). Lord, may we expect great things from thee.

As a result of what the cupbearer reported to Pharaoh, Pharaoh sent word to Potiphar that he wanted to have an audience with Joseph. Joseph was quickly brought from the dungeon.

When the Lord works, how quickly does He move.

After Joseph SOAKED, STEAMED, SHOWERED and SHAVED, he put on some clean clothes and came to stand before Pharaoh.

(Joseph: From Pit to Pinnacle by Charles R. Swindoll)

Put yourself in Joseph's sandals. For two years he sat forgotten in Pharaoh's prison. Suddenly he was released and standing before the highest official of the land. If that were you, wouldn't you have felt like voicing resentment against the cupbearer since you'd finally won your day in court? Surprisingly, Joseph displayed no resentment. Why? Because he accepted his situation as from God. He kept his heart right. In fact, in the balance of his life, from age 30 to 110, he never spoke resentful words against his brothers who'd sold him to slave traders, Potiphar's wife who'd falsely accused him of an attempted rape, or against Potiphar who believed her lies about his conduct.

v. 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."

We have now reached the critical point in our study. The words that follow are going to be the revelation of Joseph's attitude and heart. What has all this misunderstanding and injustice done to Joseph's spirit? These three+ years in prison and all of the circumstances that have surrounded his being sold into Egypt.

It would not have been abnormal at all for Joseph to have said to Pharaoh, "Dreams, dreams, dreams! All I ever do is dream. Thirteen years ago I had some dreams of grandeur too, and look what's happened to me. I'm tired of dreams. How about a little bit of reality."

v. 16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Joseph acknowledges from a human point of view he is unable to do that, but God is the one who will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.

Joseph says, "I am simply an instrument. I'm a tool in God's hands. Only God can do that, and he will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.

It is so great to see Joseph bring God into the picture right at the very beginning. It is also wonderful to see that Joseph has not lost his confidence at all in God or his assurance in God's ability to ultimately fulfill the dreams which were made to him.

He saw dramatically two years earlier how the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker were fulfilled just as the Lord had interpreted through Joseph.

v. 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile,

Now as Pharaoh begins, he sets the stage for his dream by telling Joseph that he was standing on the bank of the River Nile.

v. 18 when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds.

v. 19 After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt.

v. 20 The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first.

v. 21 But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

Here Pharaoh tells the first of his two dreams.

v. 22 In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk.

v. 23 After them, seven other heads sprouted--withered and thin and scorched by the east wind.

v. 24 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me."

Pharaoh has now finished laying his dreams before Joseph and ends his description by saying, "I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me."

(Joseph: God's Man in Egypt by Leslie Flynn)

The chief wealth of Egypt consisted of cattle and corn. The blasting east wind, dreaded by its inhabitants, would parch and shrivel corn, thus indicating a rainless season, which in turn resulted in a low Nile River, less food to eat, and loss of cattle.

v. 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Joseph in his response says, "The two dreams are one and the same in that they have one meaning."

The overriding purpose for the dreams is seen in the last statement of verse 25: "God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do."

v. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream.

In the interpretation phase here, Joseph equates the seven good cows and the seven good heads of grain as seven years.

v. 27 The seven lean, ugly cows that came up after they did are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: they are seven years of famine.

We learn from these dreams that economics are in God's hand. God has the ability

to prosper and bless, and He also has the ability to restrain the forces of blessing and prosperity so that as a result we experience need.

v. 28 It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Here Joseph again brings God back into the picture and points out to Pharaoh that the God of the universe has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do.

v. 29 Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt,

v. 30 but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land.

Pharaoh, there's some good news and some bad news. The good news is you're going to have seven years of abundant prosperity, but then there are going to be seven bad years that will ravage the land and all of the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten.

v. 31 The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe.

The pain of the latter years will cause the prosperity of the former years to be forgotten.

v. 32 The reason was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

The dream was repeated twice under two separate images for a two-fold purpose from God's perspective:

1. It is firmly decided by God that this will happen.
2. It will happen soon.

v. 33 And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.

Now that the dream has been interpreted, Joseph does not speak to Pharaoh like he did to the cupbearer in:

chap. 40:14

But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison.

In light of the dreams and the interpretation thereof, Joseph has a recommendation for Pharaoh: to tell him to find a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of preparations for the economic collapse that is going to take place. This is Joseph's counsel as a result of the interpretation.

v. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance.

Joseph goes on to say that Pharaoh should not only appoint a wise and discerning man to head up this whole program but he should appoint an agricultural committee with land commissioners so that a tax of grain might be levied upon the crops during these years of abundance to make adequate preparation for the years of stress.

v. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food.

It is Joseph's recommendation that they immediately institute a savings plan that will insure food during the difficult years.

v. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

It is Joseph's advice that grain elevators be constructed at strategic points for each city so that the country will not be ruined by the famine.

v. 37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

Joseph got a hearing from Pharaoh and his cabinet, and they agreed that his counsel was good.

v. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

Pharaoh immediately turns to his officials and asks them a question, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

v. 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and as wise as you.

You see, Joseph glorified God before Pharaoh, and now God is going to glorify Joseph by making this wonderful provision for him. Pharaoh's statement is incredible. "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and as wise as you."

v. 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."

Once again Joseph is placed in a strategic position of leadership. We saw it when he was 17 administrating the ranching operation over his brothers. We saw it in Potiphar's house. We've seen it in prison. Now we see it in the palace.

Isn't it incredible how quickly God works. Joseph has moved from the prison to the palace in a matter of a few hours.

(Joseph: God's Man in Egypt by Leslie Flynn)

What a sudden transformation! From the depths of the dungeon to the steps of the throne. Hands no longer calloused by toil, but adorned by a ring. Neck no longer bowed beneath the disgrace of prison, but circled by a chain of gold. Though his special coat had been ripped from his back years before, and though another garment had been snatched by Mrs. Potiphar, he was now enveloped in royal apparel. The investiture of a chief was a ceremony of considerable import, especially when the post conferred such high rank.

Pharaoh saw great potential in Joseph, and so he elevates him to this high position.

(Always too Soon to Quit by Robert D. Foster)

These men are "fervent in spirit" and their keynote attitude is excitement for life. They are thrilled to be alive and this spills over onto all those they contact. Have you noticed them? They are bubbling over with radiance. So don't you be a deadpan. . . sour, limp, and expressionless. Many men are as cold as a mackerel toward people, plans and prospects. With their fire almost out and the embers low, they do nothing for anyone. . . not even themselves.

v. 41 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

It is hard to describe what was going on in Joseph's mind as he listened to these words of Pharaoh. It is beyond anything he could have ever dreamed or imagined. God is certainly at work. "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

v. 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.

As soon as Pharaoh had made public his decision, he took his signet ring and put it on Joseph's finger. Then he dressed him in robes of fine linen, and finally he put a gold chain around his neck.

This scene reminds us of one of Jesus' stories:

Luke 15:22

But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet."

v. 43 He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

He made him Executive Vice-President. He not only gave him the authority in the ring which he wore and the clothes he gave him and the gold chain to put around his neck, but he also made provision for transportation in giving him a staff car. He had him ride in a chariot as his second in command.

He not only had his own staff car but the Secret Service was all around him. Men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

v. 44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt."

After making all these wonderful provisions for Joseph, he tells Joseph that he is still Pharaoh but there won't be anything done without a word of affirmation from Joseph.

v. 45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

On top of all these wonderful provisions, Pharaoh changes Joseph's name to Zaphenath-Paneah.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

Verse 45: Zaphnath-paaneah

Whenever the Egyptians spoke of Joseph they used a name that honored his God, for Zaphnath-paaneah means "revealer of secret things." The Lord alone knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10); He never does anything without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7); and the Spirit tells us of the triumphs of God which are to come. He knows what is in the darkness (Daniel 2:22), for the darkness and the light are both alike to Him (Psalm 139:12). He knows the thoughts of man (Psalm 94:11) and the secrets of the heart (Psalm 44:21). If we live close to Him, even the world will acknowledge it. Lord, reveal Thyself through us.

Can you imagine all this? This is greater than any payoff that can come on a game show. Joseph is being given everything that he will ever need.

Now the time had come in God's wonderful plan for Joseph to be made complete. He is going to have a wife whose name is Asenath, and she's the daughter of Potiphera. How much that sounds like Potipher, and probably brings to remembrance the experiences that Joseph had had some three years earlier.

Asenath is from On. This is a community on the east side of the Nile, twenty miles northwest of Memphis.

(*Joseph: From Pit to Pinnacle* by Charles R. Swindoll)

Renamed *Zaphenath-paneah* by Pharaoh, Joseph was given a unique identification. The name meant "the god speaks and lives." The wife given to Joseph was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. Her name, Asenath, was taken from a goddess worshipped in Egypt.

Can you just imagine receiving a wedding invitation?

Asenath and Zaphenath request the honor of your presence

I am sure they received everything from A to Z, as they began life together.

"And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt."

Joseph finds that it is absolutely necessary in these early months of his administration to travel extensively throughout the land in order to mark the places for the grain elevator construction and to get surveys made of all the farmland potential for these next seven years.

v. 46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt.

We now know that it has been 13 years since Joseph was taken from the pit and sold into Egypt. He has gone from the PIT to POTIPHAR to PRISON to PHARAOH over these 13 years. He is now 30 years of age.

"And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt."

As was mentioned in the previous verse, that Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt, so here it is mentioned again. He is doing these storage studies and implementing policies to insure the success of his program.

v. 47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully.

Just as Joseph had interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, so the seven years of abundance came upon the land and it produced plentifully.

v. 48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it.

It was Joseph's plan to have the storage facilities available in each city to make provision for his people.

v. 49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

Joseph stored up so much grain that the computers keeping track of it couldn't even measure the quantities that had been stored.

(Joseph: God's Man in Egypt by Leslie Flynn)

A grasshopper and an ant lived in the same field. All summer long the grasshopper jumped and made merry. But the wise little ant kept busy storing her food for the cold winter months ahead. The grasshopper laughed at the ant. "All you do all day long is work. Why don't you come and play with me?" As winter came on, the grasshopper grew cold and colder, and so hungry that one day he begged the ant, "Give me something to eat. I'm sorry I made fun of you." But the little ant replied, "Your chance is all gone, Mr. Grasshopper. The food I eat you wouldn't like. You should have been gathering your food in the summer, but you fooled away your life in the fields and now it is too late. The grasshopper went sadly away and soon died, for he hadn't used his day of plenty to prepare for the day of famine.

v. 50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On.

During these seven years of plenty and abundance, Joseph also had the thrill of seeing God provide two wonderful children through his wife Asenath.

Joseph is between 30-37 years of age at this time.

v. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."

It is altogether fitting that Joseph would name his firstborn son Manasseh because his name means "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household."

It has been difficult for Joseph these 13 years because he was constantly remembering how it was back home and all the troubles that he has been going through.

Now God's grace and glory shine upon him supremely. And in the midst of his ecstatic joy over his firstborn son, he celebrates this occasion by naming him Manasseh; "It is because God has made me forget."

(Don't Take My Grief Away by Doug Manning)

No one knows why--I am guilty of trying to answer the question with trite statements myself. I say, "If bad things happen only to bad people, we would all be good for the wrong reasons." That sounds good but does not do much to answer the question.

Grieving is as natural as
crying when you are hurt,
sleeping when you are tired,
eating when you are hungry,
or sneezing when your nose itches.
It is nature's way of healing a
broken heart.

There are times when suffering feels so good it is tempting to stay right in the middle of it. Nothing feels as good as suffering in silence, especially if everyone knows you are. Nothing can be quite as sly as the gradual movement toward enjoying your suffering.

v. 52 The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

Forgetting his troubles and fruitful in the land of his suffering—

(Don't Take My Grief Away by Doug Manning)

Life is not to end with the death of a loved one. You are to grow. You are never supposed to stop growing. You do not know the reasons you have been called to face

grief. One thing I am sure of--you were not called upon to do so as punishment. God does not parlay one life against another. He does not take one life to punish another life. He took the life He took because He thought it best for that life. Period. To think He took another person's life to teach you a lesson or to punish you is arrogance. This says your life is more important than the life of the one He took. Neither did He take the life to grow you. That, too, is arrogance. Again, He did what was best for the person He came to claim.

It was not done for your growth, but growth can come from the event. This growth can be released much easier if you do not see the death as punishment or as a sentence to a life of loneliness.

You have new experiences ahead of you. You have new worlds to explore, new feelings to feel, new relationships to grow, and in the process, a new you can result. This new you will not come easily, nor will it come quickly. You will crawl before you walk. It is like beginning a whole new life all over again. *But it can come--* believe me. It can come.

(Necessary Losses by Judith Viorst)

Mourning, we are told, can end in constructive identifications. But the process of mourning will often go awry. For when those we love die we may deal with their death by failing to deal with their death or by remaining "stuck" in the mourning process.

In prolonged or chronic mourning we do not move past the second phase. We are mired in a state of intense, unremitting grief, clinging without relief to our sorrow, anger, guilt, self-hatred or depression, unable to get on with the rest of our life. It is difficult to give anyone a timetable for mourning; not one year but two years or more may be normal for some. But a time will have to come when we become willing to let go of the lost relationship. Our mourning is pathological when we cannot, and we will not, let it go.

(Necessary Losses by Judith Viorst)

The loves, illusions, dependencies and impossible expectations that all of us have to give up in order to grow.

Joseph has done that. He has forgotten his troubles and his homeland. And now, because he has let go, he is going to be fruitful in the land of his affliction, even as he has named his second-born son Ephraim.

(*Necessary Losses* by Judith Viorst)

In periods of stability, we are putting together a structure for our life--making key choices, pursuing certain goals. In periods of transition we are challenging the premises of that structure--raising questions, exploring new possibilities. Each transition leads to termination of a previous life structure, and each termination--writes the research psychologist Daniel Levinson--"is an ending, a process of separation or loss." He goes on to say:

The task of a developmental transition is to terminate a time in one's life; to accept the losses the termination entails; to review and evaluate the past; to decide which aspects of the past to keep and which to reject; and to consider one's wishes and possibilities for the future. One is suspended between past and future, and struggling to overcome the gap that separates them. Much from the past must be given up--separated from, cut out of one's life, rejected in anger, renounced in sadness or grief. And there is much that can be used as a basis for the future. Changes must be attempted in both self and world.

John 15:8

By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so prove to be my disciples.

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He may give to you.

v. 53 The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end.

Joseph's 37th birthday is the turning point in the economy of Egypt.

v. 54 and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food.

Egypt stood out by itself because God had wonderfully made a provision for leadership and for a program to make provision for the citizens of Egypt.

v. 55 When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."

At the time of great need, when they come crying to Pharaoh, Pharaoh tells the Egyptians to go to Joseph and do what he tells you.

v. 56 When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.

At the time of need, Joseph then began to open the grain elevators. He did not get involved in a federal give-away program. He sold the grain to the Egyptians.

During the earlier years of abundance the land was taxed and the grain was placed in storage. And now these same people come and preserve their human dignity by buying grain from the government.

v. 57 And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.

The statement "And all the countries came to Egypt" causes us to catch a little glimmer of God's ultimate plan during these seven years to get the sons of Jacob and the seed of Abraham in the land of Egypt in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, that they were to be in a land that was not theirs for 430 years.

Egypt then becomes an international grain distribution center, and Joseph is in charge of all of the proceedings.

Note again that when these countries came, they came to Egypt to buy grain, not to beg for it without price.

(*Joseph: From Pit to Pinnacle* by Charles R. Swindoll)

- A. Lengthy afflictions need not discourage us. Joseph endured fourteen years of affliction, yet he aggressively lived above discouragement.
- B. Bad memories need not defeat us. Joseph was able to set aside the sting of his past experiences in order to make room for the ministry of God in his life.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: When everything is on hold in our lives, God is working out His ultimate purpose.

LESSON #2: God's timing is always perfect.

LESSON #3: Joseph never loses his confidence in God and his faithfulness to the promises.

LESSON #4: How quickly God can make things happen when He starts to work.

LESSON #5: Joseph magnifies God before Pharaoh.

LESSON #6: Economics are truly in God's hands.

LESSON #7: The blessing of God upon Joseph's life meets his every need.

LESSON #8: God expects us to forget our troubles and to be fruitful in the land of our suffering.

Just as we have witnessed Joseph preparing for the days of adversity because of the wisdom which God has given to relate to those days, so, I believe, God expects from us that as we are faithful to store His Word in our hearts and lives, we are preparing ourselves for the adversities and difficulties that are going to come our way by saving up for them.

(When the Hurt Wont' Go Away by Paul W. Powell)

If you haven't already, start today so that you will be ready when more rugged times come. Remember that you should not wait until the storm clouds are gathering to build a storm cellar. You do not wait until your house is on fire to take out insurance. You do not wait until thieves are prying open your windows to put in a burglar-alarm system. And you do not wait until the day of adversity to develop those inner strengths and resources necessary to stand against the stress and strain of life.

Start now living one day at a time.
Start now developing a simple and growing faith.
Start now accepting life as hard.
Start now keeping sympathy alive.
Start now building your cathedrals.
Start now having an attitude of gratitude.
And start now looking at life to its end.
Then when your day of adversity comes, you will be able to stand.

(Joseph by F. B. Meyer)

"The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not obtained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

"Standing on what too long we bore,
With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,
We may discern--unseen before--
A path to higher destinies!"
Longfellow.