

STUDY NUMBER FIVE - Genesis 42:1-38

INTRODUCTION:

Mark, my son-in-law has a Ziggy cartoon hanging in his office, with Ziggy down in the corner and the world on his back. The statement underneath is: "It's you and me against the world; personally I think we are gonna get creamed!"

I am sure there have been numerous times through these last 13 years that Joseph has felt that way. But now God has done a wonderful thing in elevating Joseph to second in leadership in the land, through a number of dramatic circumstances.

I remember a number of years ago having a couples conference at Kaleo Lodge near Van. We had a full house, a lot of friends, and a great program planned, hoping that we might touch the lives of the couples who were there. Saturday night the pump went out, and it was necessary for all of us to go home early. Driving back to Tyler I was fuming and fussing. I am never quiet under stress! Usually it's meaningless monologue, but at least I'm letting off steam.

Pearl is real quiet and very seldom says anything, and she let me go on for about 30 or 40 miles all the way to town about my disappointment. Finally, as we were turning in the driveway, she said, "Don, I think the God who runs the universe could have kept a little old pump running one more day if He had wanted to."

That certainly puts it in perspective, doesn't it? God's perfect plan is being worked out in Joseph's life. The stops and starts in that plan are wondrous for us to behold, and our own hearts ought to be encouraged as we see God faithfully meet Joseph's needs at every turn of the road.

(When the Ceiling is Zero by Robert D. Foster)

Be assured, nothing just happens to God's man. There are no mere accidents in your life. In this world of perpetual change, fluctuating events, and shifting circumstances, it is great to have a stable center that says, "My times are in thy hand" (Psalm 31:15).

Listen to the way that John Wilder puts it: "A loving Father has obligated Himself

and guaranteed that everything that takes place in the lives of those who love Him is for good.

"That means that every tear, every sorrow, every misfortune, every catastrophe, every calamity, even hurricanes and tornadoes, famines and freezes, depressions and plagues, sickness, pain, disappointments, and even death--all things--work together, cooperate, move in a mighty teamwork for good to them that love God."

In our last study we left Joseph as the Executive Vice-President of the land of Egypt, second in command only to Pharaoh, after having interpreted Pharaoh's dreams.

The dreams that Pharaoh had predicted that there would be seven years of abundance and prosperity followed by seven years of economic collapse and famine.

During these good years, Joseph has instituted a grain conservation program that now has made it possible for Egypt to continue on a stable course even though the land is not producing.

Joseph is now married and has two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

All of this has happened so quickly it is difficult to relate to Joseph in this new role. He not only was elevated to second in command, but he was given a signet ring from Pharaoh, along with clothes and a gold necklace. He now rides in the second chariot, he has his own Secret Service, and when he comes, everyone says, "Bow the knee."

Pharaoh just felt that he had to have this guy in his administration, and so we've got the story of the peanut farmer become president--

from the PIT to POTIPHAR to PRISON to the PALACE

from RAGS TO RICHES overnight.

Joseph was 30 years old when all of this took place. So was Jesus when He entered into His public ministry.

I know Joseph was thrilled with Asenath, his wife. The reason his joy is so pure is because he waited for God's provision. God had somebody special because he waited.

Lamentations 3:22-27

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.

The question now before Joseph was: Would he be able to accept prosperity and still keep his heart right with God? He was only 30 years old at this time, and his new position and prosperity could have easily turned his attention away from spiritual things. However, God has been preparing him for 13 years since Joseph had been sold as a slave by his brothers. These years of training were needed to prepare Joseph's character and to give him strength for the test he was now facing. Although Joseph's new-found prosperity provided an extreme test to see if he would keep his heart right with God, it has been a principle of God in every age that He never tests a man beyond what He is able to bear.

In this new position of prosperity Joseph resisted and repelled the natural temptation of pride and arrogance with the same thoroughness which he had the temptation of passion. He was never drawn away from his utter loyalty to God. Regardless of where he was, he stayed true to God. Joseph had gone through severe testings to bring him to this moment. God cannot bring Joseph forth until Joseph was completely ready for the next advancement in his life.

After Joseph was elevated in leadership, we have the seven flourishing years of his administration. It is during this time that Joseph prepares the land and the people for the seven years of famine that are going to yet be ahead of them.

As the scene of the 42nd chapter opens, the seven years are past; and now we are beginning to feel the effects of the famine, both in Egypt and in other countries of the earth.

Joseph is probably 38 or 39 years old when the experiences of this chapter transpire.

We are in the beginning of the second 7-year period.

Because of the intensity of the famine, many people are coming from other countries to Egypt to buy grain, that they might live.

v. 1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?"

The TV cameras move from Egypt back to Canaan and to Joseph's homestead. The scene of our story now shifts back to Canaan to Joseph's father Jacob. The account opens with the fact that Jacob has received some reports that there is grain in Egypt.

This opening scene causes us to recognize that Joseph is a type of Christ:

John 14:1-3

Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Jacob's hope lies in the Joseph who goes before and has made all things ready.

There are 66 mouths to feed in this family. Benjamin, the youngest, has 10 children; and so we are facing a crisis in the need of food.

These next chapters are going to be like a golf match. We are going to go from the 14th hole to the 17th green to the 13th fairway. We are going to be going back and forth between Egypt and Canaan until we get these two parties together.

For Joseph it has been 13 years of discipline.

For Jacob it was 20 years of his service of Laban in the land of Haran.

Jacob calls an emergency Cabinet meeting of the sons. His first announcement is: "I've been reading the *Wall Street Journal* and grain futures in Egypt really look good! In fact, that's the only place that anyone has any grain."

Jacob then raises the question to his sons: "Why do you just keep looking at each other?"

We know why. Just the word "Egypt" probably made the fellows tremble because of their guilt over Joseph.

God has said in Genesis 15, when the Abrahamic Covenant was instituted, that his seed would be in bondage in a land that was not theirs. And now we can see God's eternal purpose in taking Jacob and his sons toward Egypt, and how each of these providential circumstances are being weaved into the persistent purpose and total fulfillment of God's program.

Lord, may we learn to rest more in your eternal purpose and the accomplishment of that purpose in our lives.

v. 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."

Jacob doesn't quite understand the emotional response of the boys as they keep staring at each other. And so he repeats himself: "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt." And then he issues a command to them: "Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."

Egypt is about 250 miles southwest of Hebron where they are located, so it is going to be quite a trip for them to take.

Jacob gives the fellows a command now and tells them to draw out some money from the bank, go down there to buy grain, so that they can live and not die.

It is amazing how useless money is in a poverty-stricken area. The money will only be of value in Egypt to buy grain that they might continue to live.

Larry Norman wrote a song called *"I Wish We'd All Been Ready"*:

Life was filled with guns and wars,
And everyone got trampled on the floor.
I wish we'd all been ready.

Children died, the days grew cold,
A piece of bread would buy a bag of gold.
I wish we'd all been ready.

There's no time to change your mind,
The Son has come, and you've been left behind.

A phrase in that song has always stood out to me--

"a piece of bread would buy a bag of gold."

v. 3 Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt.

What an experience this must have been for these ten men to travel over the route where Joseph was taken. I am sure that each of them had a fear in their hearts that possibly they might run into someone in Egypt who knew Joseph or that perhaps they would be apprehended and accused because of what they had done. So needless to say, the journey was a real dread for each of them.

v. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

Jacob only had two boys from his much-loved wife Rachel. One was Joseph and the other was Benjamin. Benjamin was born when Rachel died. And now because Joseph was gone, Benjamin had taken that very special place in Jacob's heart. And he wants to protect him from any possible danger, and so keeps him from going along with the other ten to the land of Egypt.

This is exactly the way he worked things out when Joseph was home back in chap. 37. All the brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem and Joseph was kept at home.

v. 5 So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

The food stamp line must have been pretty long. There were evidently quite a large number of people from surrounding countries who were coming to Egypt to buy grain.

"The famine was in the land of Canaan also."

v. 6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

Little did the brothers expect to find that Joseph was the ruler over the land. Joseph's elevation from the prison to the palace was faster than President Carter's elevation from nowhere to the White House.

Joseph is the head of the Food and Drug Administration and the Food Stamp Program.

He has been working for 7 long years preparing for this time of crisis, and now he is simply working his plan.

He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. It was his responsibility to oversee the grain distribution.

Joseph had to be careful about foreign exports and wheat allocations so that he would have enough for his own citizens.

"So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground."

You know Joseph was thinking, Dreams, Dreams, Dreams--and now he's recognizing Reality, Reality, Reality.

They're coming on a mission of mercy and wanting to make a request so that their lives might be sustained. And so in this serious moment they don't want to create any trouble or problems, so they bow themselves down in humble obeisance to the ruler of the land.

v. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

In the intervening years that have transpired, now probably 21 or 22 years, Joseph has changed from being a teenaged boy from the land of the Hebrews to a full-grown man in Egypt, well acquainted with the people and dressed accordingly. He also speaks fluent Egyptian, and this keeps the brothers from recognizing him. Joseph, however, recognizes them because they were already men when the brothers sold him into Egypt. There has not been much change in their faces except some aging in the past twenty-some years.

"As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them."

This is the beginning of their trial and testing before Joseph reveals himself to them.

He asks them "Where do you come from?" and they answer honestly, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

v. 8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

v. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

Joseph remembered the dreams. Here he is going back to some years earlier and realizing how faithful God has been in the fulfillment of the dreams which He had given to him on that occasion.

Now Joseph accuses them of being spies: that they have come from the north to the south like some Yankees come south to start a Civil War, and they have come to check out the undefended or unprotected parts of the land so that they could make an invasion.

It is interesting that his brothers had looked upon him as a spy because he had the responsibility of administration during his earlier years over them, and he was also sent to them when they sold him into Egypt.

Joseph is not seeking retaliation at all. He is prompted by principle in taking these steps. He is endeavoring to discover the condition of his father and the attitude of the brothers to his young brother Benjamin through these circumstances that are now being created.

I am sure they often called Joseph "Daddy's Little Spy."
Dan and Naphtali, and Gad and Asher are probably the ones who came up with that name because of his telling Jacob about their bad behavior.

v. 10 "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food.

v. 11 We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

They repeat their previous reason but Joseph acts like he does not even hear them.

They continue to fortify their argument by pointing up the fact that all ten of them are sons of one man. They are honest men, and as his servants they are not spies.

v. 12 "No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

This inability of Joseph to hear their pleas is to remind them of a prior occasion when Joseph had been placed in the pit and they failed to hear his plaintive cry for deliverance. They didn't hear Joseph either 22 years ago.

v. 13 But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."

Now they divulge a great deal more of their personal family history. They own up to the fact that they are actually twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. Then they confess that the youngest is with their father. So Joseph now knows that Benjamin has remained home and is alive and his father is also alive. They then make reference to Joseph himself by saying that one is no more.

Joseph realizes the fact that Benjamin has probably taken his place in his father's heart, and that's the reason he has remained home.

Evidently, as the years have transpired, they are believing their own lie in feeling that Joseph has truly died in his service of slavery in the land of Egypt.

(Growing Through Mid-Life Crises by John Sterner)

"The truth shall make you free," reads a bumper sticker, "but first it shall make you miserable."

The one thing that happens here in verse 13, anyway, is Joseph finds out what has happened to him.

v. 14 Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies!"

No matter what they said, Joseph is going to mete out justice in this situation. Their cries are going to go unheeded, and so he says, "It is just as I told you: you are spies!"

v. 15 And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

Now Joseph puts his finger on his much-loved brother Benjamin and says that they cannot be taken away from Egypt unless the younger brother comes down.

v. 16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!"

Joseph's proposal here is that nine of them remain behind and one of them returns to get Benjamin and bring him back. Then he will know by this that they are speaking the truth, but if not, then he is going to consider them as spies. This is a very serious charge, which has accompanying with it the sentence of execution.

v. 17 And he put them all in custody for three days.

Joseph turns them over to Potiphar, and they are kept incarcerated for three days.

Joseph is now Potiphar's boss. Isn't it interesting how God works these things out?

Someone said, What do you call an Aggie after he graduates? And the answer is BOSS.

He is here giving them a 72-hour softening-up process.

These three days in prison under the sentence of death were probably very frightening for the brothers and were days to induce conviction about their prior deeds in relationship to Joseph.

v. 18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God:

v. 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households.

v. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

After the three days of being under the sentence of death, Joseph comes with a promise of life if they will do what he asks. Nine of them are to return and carry the grain to their families and then they are to make a return trip and bring their younger brother to Joseph.

v. 21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brothers. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."

Now Joseph can understand what they are saying, but they do not believe that he can as they are speaking Hebrew. Yet they are making an act of repentance:

1. The CONSCIENCE is saying, "We truly are guilty."
2. Their MEMORY is saying, "We saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded."
3. Their REASON is saying, "Therefore this distress is come upon us."

Numbers 32:23

Be sure, your sins will find you out.

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

v. 22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood."

Reuben, the oldest, the firstborn, is saying, "I told you so! I knew it all the time!"

It was Reuben who tried to work out circumstances for delivering Joseph home safely to his father, but he was overruled when the other nine chose to sell Joseph into Egypt and then to deceive Jacob by telling him that a wild beast had destroyed him.

v. 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

Hebrews 4:13

All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

2 Chron. 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

We shall also be held accountable for every word that we speak.

And so as Joseph stands and listens, he understands what the brothers are saying, but they are not aware of this.

v. 24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

Joseph is moved to tears because of the painful dialogue that is going on between the brothers, under the pressure of the circumstances created by Joseph. The question that Joseph needs to have satisfied is: Will they stand with their father and Benjamin or turn against them like they did Joseph. Joseph wants to put them in the same position relative to Benjamin as they once were with him.

He wept because of a desire for a quick end to this trial and a deep longing to reveal himself to them. Joseph wept and kept his heart through all these circumstances. He is answering the memory of his own personal injury with tears.

They are tears of compassion for his brothers.

They are tears of joy over God's faithfulness to fulfill the promises which He has made to him.

But when he returned to them and spoke, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. Ringing in the ears of these brothers are those words, "You are spies," the ears that were closed to Joseph on a prior occasion.

"He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes."

Evidently, he wants to enforce his demands and drive home the power of his leadership and stir up their personal remorse.

Simeon must have been the leader in the selling project since he is the secondborn son. Reuben was certainly desirous to free Joseph and get him back to his father.

Now when they each are facing liability to that isolation and that loss of liberty to which they confined Joseph, their sin against him is brought to their remembrance.

He binds Simeon before them so they can have a visible picture of his condition until they should choose to return to the land with Benjamin.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

His roughness toward these brothers did not reflect Joseph's true feelings. He behaved with divinely-given wisdom, for their good. But his heart was tender and he turned away to weep unseen, and to avoid recognition before the proper time. Likewise, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because sin separated His people from Himself; but He knew that one day they would look on Him whom they had pierced (Zechariah 12:10). Lord, teach us to know Thy tears.

v. 25 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,

Joseph will not be debtor to his own family. The salvation which he is offering is free and therefore the command to place their money in the sacks is given.

v. 26 they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

The nine brothers are now on their homeward journey 250 miles back to the northeast in Hebron. They are probably discussing much the conversation and the strange way the ruler of the land handled them. What strange experiences were theirs during these days, and they are also trying to plan the account that they are going to give to their father Jacob about the absence of Simeon from among them.

v. 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.

They stopped at the first KOA possible and one of the nine brothers opened his sack to give his donkey a little bit to eat. He found the silver in his sack.

As an aggravation of their apprehensions and to keep the pressure of the trial on them of their integrity and honesty, he puts the money in their sacks.

Now they are wondering what new charge will be brought against them since they have not only the grain but also the money.

v. 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?"

You can just see this brother coming with the silver in his hand and telling his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is in my sack!"

The hearts of the brothers sink, and they begin trembling. The question is a marvel of fruitful reaction to trouble: "What is this that God has done to us?"

What does all of this mean? Sometimes he has to wither our business, blight our fortunes and smite us with disease, foil our purposes, break up our schemes, turn our counsel back on us, confound us at every point, until finally we raise the question: "What is this that God has done to us?"

Hebrews 12:5ff

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they discipline us for a short time which seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

v. 29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said,

How differently the report of the brothers is this time than on the prior occasion when they were using deceit to cause their father to believe that Joseph was dead. Now they are coming in complete honesty to share with him every detail of what had taken place on their journey.

v. 30 The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land.

v. 31 But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies.

v.32 We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

They have recounted perfectly the conversation that went on between them and Joseph.

v. 33 Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.

v. 34 But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.'"

Having now recounted all the experiences and the proposal which Joseph made with them about keeping Simeon as hostage until they were to bring their younger brother down to him.

v. 35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.

For Jacob the money in the sack indicated trouble ahead.

You can imagine how difficult this is for Jacob to put all these pieces together. All he can think about right now is SIMEON and SILVER, much less the cruelty of the ruler in the land of Egypt. Why would he keep Simeon, and why would he want to see Benjamin?

v. 36 Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!"

Jacob now recounts the experiences of the past. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, "And now you want to take Benjamin."

Many times experiences of sorrow like this are magnified in the midst of it so that we do not have a comprehension of what is truly taking place.

The bloody coat had caused Jacob to assume that Joseph was dead.

Jacob is saying, All these things are against me or upon me as heavy burdens, which lie upon me.

If Jacob could only wait for a little bit, he would begin to truly recognize that all these things were not against him but working together for good.

Wait until you can see the end before you condemn it.

So oftentimes we snatch at appearances, pronounce judgment upon incomplete processes. Why do we not learn from our ignorance.

God's never-failing providence is still at work.

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Matt. 11:28-30

Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my load is light.

(*Genesis* by Donald Grey Barnhouse)

We are prone to think that God's blessings are not for our good because we look at circumstances, not realizing that it is impossible for God to do anything but for our good. It is absurd to think that something could be "against" us, since our heavenly Father is in control. Believing this, we can face each incident with the certainty that it is for our good. When there is a disaster, humanly speaking, we know that the Father's hand has sent it and the Father's love has measured it with such fine calibration that it will exactly fit our need. Lord, we thank Thee that all things work together for our good.

Oh, the frustrating wail of one who is fighting God's eternal purpose. Everything is against me!

Jacob fought this battle back in Genesis 32 earlier in his life as he wrestled all night with the angel of the Lord. Life is not just one crisis but is a constant series of crises, as we learn to do it His way and to follow His plan.

Isaiah 55:8, 9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

2 Cor. 4:17

For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.

v. 37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."

Reuben, the firstborn who longed to take Joseph back to his father, way back 22 years ago, now steps forward and is willing to take this drastic step of putting his two sons in jeopardy if Benjamin is not safely brought back to Jacob.

v. 38 But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.

Jacob has got his heels dug in, and he's going to fight this thing as far as he possibly can.

Jacob in his resistance refuses for Benjamin to go because he is the only one who is left from Rachel's family. Jacob is still operating on the principle that it was going to be through Rachel's offspring that the Messianic promise is going to be fulfilled--thus the reason for his great resistance.

Jacob is a lot like his dad Isaac in determining a Messianic error. Judah, however, is going to be the one chosen, just like Jacob was chosen over Esau.

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

We are programmed from birth to have certain human tendencies because life doesn't always work the way we'd like it to work. These tendencies qualify us as human beings. Believe it or not, they have a direct bearing on the text focusing on Jacob which we're about to consider. Here are those tendencies:

- A. We tend to respond negatively rather than positively.
- B. We tend to view problems horizontally rather than vertically.
- C. We tend to resist rather than tolerate new ideas.

Comment: All three of these tendencies intensify as we grow older. Jacob was not exempt from any of them. In fact, he wrestled with them for well over a hundred years. In chapter 42 God turns our attention away from the main character and focuses it on Jacob. Keep that in mind as we proceed.

(Necessary Losses by Judith Viorst)

Letting our children go, and letting our dreams for our children go, must be counted among our necessary losses.

"I've managed, with plenty of tears, to accept the losses of middle age," I recently heard a fiftyish friend of mine say. "In fact, I'm mature and adjusted enough to really like where I am. I just wish The Powers That Be would let me stay here." All of us who've managed to survive our mid-life crisis would be grateful just to "stay here" too--here with our seasoned sense of things, with passion and perspective, with people we love and work we want to do. Having relinquished our former self, un wrinkled and immortal, we feel we have done enough--we would like to be through with the letting go and the losing and the leaving. We aren't through.

CONCLUSION:

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

LESSON #1: We can see the persistence of divine purpose. God is working to the ultimate fulfillment of His promises.

LESSON #2: You can see the strength of human affection by the love which Joseph has for his brothers. He loves them unconditionally.

LESSON #3: You can see the power of a guilty conscience. Although 22 years have now transpired, the boys can remember even as though it were yesterday the sin which they committed against Joseph.

LESSON #4: The nature of true repentance, affecting the conscience, the memory, and the reason:

1. The conscience - We are verily guilty.
2. The memory - We saw the anguish.
3. The reason - Therefore is this distress come upon us.

LESSON #5: The short-sightedness of human reason: Jacob is looking at the present events as being against him, but from God's point of view they are all working together for good.

LESSON #6: When you are fighting God's purpose, you can plan on everything being against you.

In concluding this study of Joseph's life, we see seven truths that are prominent:

1. **GOD HAS A PURPOSE FOR EVERY LIFE.** Paul realized this when he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24

Even the Lord Jesus said to the Heavenly Father, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

2. **A PURPOSE FOR EVERY LIFE CALLS FOR DISCIPLINE** as a means of preparation. Trials and suffering are a part of God's school in training the believer for a special work. Joseph had thirteen years of discipline under the hand of God that he might be ready at God's time. Moses spent forty years in the desert getting ready for the job God had for him.

3. **THE DUTY OF LIFE IS FAITHFULNESS.** Joseph held fast to his integrity in spite of the most trying circumstances. His confidence was in God and His faithfulness. Joseph's faithfulness to God was evidenced by his faithfulness to his earthly masters as well.

4. **GOD WILL PERFORM TO THE END WHAT HE HAS BEGUN.**

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

As Job also stated, "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10

5. **GOD IS GLORIFIED WHEN OTHERS ARE FAITHFULLY SERVED.** No matter who Joseph's master was—his earthly father, Potiphar, the jailer, or Pharaoh--Joseph glorified God by serving others faithfully.

6. GOD PROVES HIMSELF TO THOSE WHO TRUST HIM.

By the time Joseph was elevated to the position second to Pharaoh, it had been many years since the dreams of his youth. And even now they were not completely fulfilled. He had committed his way to the Lord and had trusted completely in Him, and he had no reservations about God's ability to bring His will to pass. And God proved Himself righteous in fulfilling Joseph's dreams.

7. GOD'S WISDOM IS VERIFIED BY THE OUTCOME OF EVENTS. Although Joseph's years of trial had been a mystery to him, his present position had made him realize that God had known what He was doing all along. Joseph has witnessed the sufficiency of God for every situation. He is now prepared for anything else God would want to do through him.