

Genesis Chapter 42

Verses 1-3

Jacob's sons were paralyzed in the famine, and Jacob was reluctant to let his family return to Egypt, not knowing what would happen to them (verse 4).

But, with no other choice left, he dispatched them to buy grain in Egypt (verse 2).

Genesis 42:1 "Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?"

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt":

That is, to be sold there, or otherwise it being there, unless it could be bought, would have been of no avail to foreigners.

Wherefore the Septuagint version is that there was a sale there, a sale of corn.

The word has the signification of "breaking" in it, because that bread corn is broke in the mill, or is broken from the heap when sold or distributed, or because when eaten it breaks the fast.

Now Jacob had either seen persons passing by with corn, of which he inquired from whence they had it, who replied, from Egypt.

Or he understood by the report of others that corn was to be bought there.

Though some of the Jewish writers would have it, as Jarchi observes; that he saw it by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

"Jacob said unto, his sons, why do ye look one upon another?"

Like persons in surprise, distress and despair, at their wits' end.

Not knowing what to do, what course to take, and which way to turn themselves, and scarce able to speak to one another, and consult with each other what was proper to be done.

For it seems not so agreeable that they should be charged as idle persons, careless and unconcerned, indifferent and inactive.

Rather, if the other sense is not acceptable, the meaning may be, "why do ye look?" here and there, in the land of Canaan, where it is to no purpose to look for corn.

Look where it is to be had.

Genesis 42:2 "And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

"And he said, behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt":

This explains what is meant by the phrase he saw, one sense being put for another.

"Get ye down thither":

As fast as you can without delay.

Egypt lay lower than Canaan, and therefore they are bid to go down, as when they went from there to Canaan they are said to go up (Gen. 45:25).

"And buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die":

Which shows the famine was very pressing, since, unless they could buy corn from Egypt they could not live, but must die.

The fame of Egypt's great fortune had spread.

Word had filtered back even to Joseph's family, that there was food for sale in Egypt.

Suddenly nothing was important, except finding food to keep their families alive.

Now this family had not heard from Joseph in twenty years.

The brothers assumed that Joseph was dead by now.

They had forgotten that they sent Joseph to be sold into Egypt.

Of course, the father had been convinced that Joseph was dead.

Genesis 42:3 "And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt."

"And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt":

They obeyed their father's orders, and immediately set out for Egypt.

"Ten" of them went down in a body together, all but Benjamin, so that it is easily reckoned who they were, and they are called not Jacob's sons, as they were.

But Joseph's brethren, whom they had sold into Egypt, and to whom now they were going, though they knew it not, to buy corn of him in their necessity.

And to whom they would be obliged to yield obeisance, as they did.

Genesis 42:4 "But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him."

"Benjamin" (see 35:16-19).

He was the youngest of all, the second son of Rachel, Jacob's beloved, and the favorite of his father since he thought Joseph was dead.

The "Mischief" that Jacob had in mind certainly was a fear that something similar to what happened to Joseph might happen to Benjamin.

It is hard to determine Joseph's real motive in testing his brothers.

Most scholars feel that Joseph was not being vindictive, but was engaged merely in official probing and testing.

However, Joseph's manner, coupled with the numerous tests through which he put his brothers, gives the distinct impression that he was humbling his previously arrogant brothers (verses 6-14).

Genesis 42:5 "And the sons of Israel came to buy [corn] among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan."

"And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came":

Either among the Egyptians that came to buy, or among those who came from different countries, or rather particularly among the Canaanites, as the Targum of Jonathan.

With these they might join upon the road, and then go together in a body where the market for corn was.

"For the famine was in the land of Canaan":

This obliged the inhabitants of it as well as Jacob's family to seek for corn elsewhere; and confirms the sense of the preceding clause.

This, though a very fruitful land, yet when God withheld a blessing from it, it became barren, as it had been before (Gen. 12:10).

And was to try the faith of those good men to whom God had given it, and to wean their hearts from being set upon it, and to put them upon seeking a better country, as they did.

What a surprising turn of events.

Here these who sold him, were coming for help.

Note ten brethren.

"Ten" means world government.

Jacob had lost his favorite son, Joseph.

He was not about to risk the life of his only other son, Benjamin, by his beloved Rachel.

These Hebrews would not have anything to do with Egyptians, if they had a choice.

Genesis 42:6 "And Joseph [was] the governor over the land, [and] he [it was] that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him [with] their faces to the earth."

"Bowed down":

Without their appreciating it at the time, Joseph's dream became reality (see 37:5-8).

Recognition of Joseph was unlikely because:

- (1) Over 15 years had elapsed and the teenager sold into slavery had become a mature adult;
- (2) He had become Egyptian in appearance and dress;
- (3) He treated them without a hint of familiarity (verses 7-8); and
- (4) They thought he was dead (verse 13).

The fact that they "bowed down themselves before him" brings to mind the fulfillment of the dreams they had gone to great lengths to thwart (verse 9; 37:5-11).

Joseph's dream of the stars bowing to him had finally come true.

Dreams we have from God may not instantly occur, but they will happen, if they are from God.

Genesis 42:7 "And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food."

"And Joseph saw his brethren":

Among those that came to buy corn, and when they prostrated themselves before him.

"And he knew them":

Some of them being at man's estate, and their beards grown when they sold him, and their habits and dress now being much the same it was then, and by them he knew the younger.

"But made himself strange unto them":

Took no notice of them as his relations, but carried himself to them as he did to other foreigners, and yet more strangely.

"And spake roughly unto them":

Or hard things or words; put on a stern countenance, and spoke with a high tone and in a rough surly manner to them.

"And he said unto them, whence come ye?"

Who are ye?

Of what country are ye?

What is your business here?

"And they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food":

Which they could not get in Canaan, the famine being there so great.

You must remember, Joseph was just a lad of seventeen when his brothers sold him.

He, probably, had changed considerably.

First of all, he was not dressed as a Hebrew.

He would have an Egyptian hair style, as well.

Just maturity changes one's looks from age seventeen to thirty seven.

He has every right to throw them in jail and the authority to do so.

He chose not to.

Even if they thought they might see him, they would not expect him to be a ruler.

Genesis 42:8 "And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him."

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

It being about twenty two years since they saw him, and then he was young, and his beard not grown, as now it was.

And besides, he was clothed as a prince, and spoke the Egyptian language.

And being in such great grandeur and splendor, and in such power and authority, and having such a retinue attending him, they never once thought of him, whom they supposed that he might be dead.

Having never heard of him all this time; or, however, it could not come into their minds, that he whom they sold for a slave could ever be governor of the land of Egypt.

This was another shadow of Jesus.

Jesus brethren rejected him and cast him out, but when he comes again, every knee will bow.

The Bible says this time He is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

His physical family will not recognize Him.

Spiritual Israel will know Him.

Verses 9-22

The brothers' final evaluation after being imprisoned for 3 days, after protesting the charge of espionage, and after hearing the royal criterion for establishing their innocence (verses 15, 20), revealed their guilty conscience and their understanding that vengeance for their wrongdoing to Joseph had probably arrived (verses 21-22).

Calling themselves "honest men" (verse 10), was hardly an accurate assessment.

Genesis 42:9 "And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye [are] spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

"And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them":

Joseph remembered his boyhood dreams about his brothers bowing down to him (37:9), as they were coming true.

Their bowing and prostrating themselves before him brought to his remembrance his dreams of their sheaves making obeisance to his, and of the sun, moon, and eleven stars, doing the same to him (Gen. 37:7).

"And said unto them, ye are spies":

Not believing they were, nor absolutely asserting that they were such.

But this he said to try them, and what they would say for themselves, and in order to lead on to further discourse with them, and to get knowledge of his father and brother Benjamin, whether living or not.

He dealt with them as a judge on the bench, when examining persons, whose charges have the nature of an interrogation, as this has: "ye are spies"; are ye not?

Surely ye must be, and unless you give a better account of yourselves, I must take you as such.

"To see the nakedness of the land ye are come":

What parts of it are weakest, most defenseless, and less fortified, and most easy to break in at, and invade the land.

And it was not without reason that the Egyptians might suspect the neighboring nations round about them, being in distress, and hearing of corn in Egypt, of forming a plan of coming upon them and taking away their corn by force.

And might be the reason why foreigners that came to buy corn were brought before Joseph and examined by him.

Genesis 42:10 "And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come."

"And they said unto him, nay, my lord":

One in the name of the rest, or each in his turn, denying that they were spies, and addressing him with the greatest reverence and submission, calling him their lord, and thus further accomplishing his dreams.

"But to buy food are thy servants come":

That and no other was the errand they came upon.

Genesis 42:11 "We [are] all one man's sons; we [are] true [men], thy servants are no spies."

"We are all one man's sons":

Therefore, not likely to be spies.

It could hardly be thought that a single family should engage in such an affair; or that one man would, send his sons as spies.

Especially all of them, as that being a dangerous affair; and they being liable to be taken up and put to death.

And as more families than one must be concerned in such an enterprise, it is reasonable to suppose that if they had been spies they would have been of different families.

And also not together, but in different parts of the kingdom, to observe the fittest place to enter in at and execute their plan.

"We are true men":

That spoke truth when they said they came to buy corn.

Were honest, upright, and sincere in what they said, nor would they, nor durst they, tell a lie.

"Thy servants are no spies":

This they expressed in the strongest terms, and with the fullest assurance they could, detesting the charge and character of being spies.

They deserved this rough treatment that Joseph was giving them.

We can see shadows of Jesus in this situation.

Jesus fed the multitude.

Joseph was feeding the multitudes that did not have food.

Genesis 42:12 "And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

"And he said unto them, nay":

This argument will not do, I am not to be put off with such words as these.

If you can produce no better proof of your being honest men than this, or give no better account of yourselves, I must abide by it.

"To see the nakedness of the land ye are come":

This he urged in order to get a further account from them of their family and the state of it, which he was anxious to know.

Genesis 42:13 "And they said, Thy servants [are] twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest [is] this day with our father, and one [is] not."

"And they said, thy servants are twelve brethren":

Or rather, "were twelve", since one afterwards is said not to be.

"The sons of one man in the land of Canaan":

Of Jacob, who dwelt there; this is said with the same view as before, to show the improbability of their being spies.

"And, behold, the youngest is this day with our father":

Meaning Benjamin, whom Joseph was eager to hear of, and no doubt was glad to hear he was alive, and his father also, and that they were both together in the land of Canaan.

"And one is not":

Is not in the land of the living, is dead; for so they thought Joseph was, who was the person intended; as appears from what both Reuben and Judah afterwards say (Gen. 42:22).

Yet he was before them, and was the person they were speaking to.

This must be very striking and affecting to Joseph, who knew full well they meant him.

Genesis 42:14 "And Joseph said unto them, That [is it] that I spake unto you, saying, Ye [are] spies:"

"And Joseph said unto them, that is it that I spake unto you, saying, ye are spies":

This proves it, or at least gives strong suspicion of it.

Since at first they seemed to speak of themselves, as if they were the only sons of one man and there were no more.

Now they speak of twelve, and make mention of one being at home with his father.

But seeing that he sent so many of them, why not all?

Why should one only be left at home?

Genesis 42:15 "Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither."

"Hereby ye shall be proved":

Whether spies, or not, namely, by producing their youngest brother, who was said to be at home with his father.

"By the life of Pharaoh":

Speaking an oath in the name of the king would most likely have masked Joseph's identity from the brother.

Perhaps it also prevented them from grasping the significance of his declaration, "I fear God" (verse 18).

This custom of swearing by the life of their king, or by his head, continued with the Egyptians, as Aben Ezra says, unto his times; though some take this to be a wish or prayer for the life of Pharaoh, and render it, "may Pharaoh live".

Or, at most, but a strong emphatic declaration, that as dear as the life of Pharaoh was to him, so surely they should not stir from the place where they were, unless their youngest brother Benjamin was brought there.

"Except your youngest brother come hither":

Joseph wanted to find out if they had done the same or a similar thing to Benjamin as to himself.

Genesis 42:16 "Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether [there be any] truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye [are] spies."

"Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother":

He proposes that one of them might be sent by them to their father's house, and bring Benjamin down to Egypt.

"And ye shall be kept in prison":

The rest of them till he came.

The experience of being put "in prison" caused the brothers to discuss their guilt concerning Joseph (verses 21-22), which may have been Joseph's purpose in testing them.

"That your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you":

By this it would be seen whether they were men of truth and honesty or not; and should their brother be brought they would appear to be good men and true.

Should not their brother they spoke of be produced, it would be a plain case that they were not the honest men they pretended to be, nor did they come merely to buy corn, but instead they came with an ill intention.

Genesis 42:17 "And he put them all together into ward three days."

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

In order to consult together, and agree who should be sent to fetch their brother.

And which it seems probable in this length of time they could not agree upon, no one caring to be the bringer of such evil tidings to their father.

Joseph was giving them a little taste of the suffering that he had for so long.

Somewhere along the line, they must repent of their wicked ways, and then must ask Joseph to forgive them.

Genesis 42:18 "And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; [for] I fear God:"

"And Joseph said unto them the third day":

His heart yearning towards them, though he put on such an appearance.

Finding they could not come to an agreement among themselves who should go on the errand, he thought fit to recede from his former order, and to give them another.

"This do, and live":

Meaning what he was about to say to them, which if they punctually observed and performed, it would be the means of saving their lives.

"For I fear God":

And therefore, would not do either an unjust or cruel thing.

This might have given them an idea of who he was.

But there being among the Gentiles, in all nations, some few that feared God, they took no further notice of it than this, that they might expect just and equitable dealings by him.

Since, though he was in such a high place, he knew and owned there was one higher than he, to whom he was accountable.

Verses 19-20

"If ye be true men":

Joseph took their assessment of themselves at face value when exhorting them to respond to his proposals, but still asked for a hostage.

Genesis 42:19 "If ye [be] true [men], let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:"

"If ye be true men":

As you say you are.

"Let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison":

Agree among yourselves which of you (for one of you must), remain in prison where you are, and the rest being set at liberty.

"Go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses":

Joseph, though he dealt with them after this manner to get what knowledge he could of his family, and to get sight of his brother.

Yet was concerned for the good of them and theirs, lest they should be in extreme want through the famine, and that they might have a speedy supply of corn, was he was not willing to detain them any longer.

Genesis 42:20 "But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so."

"But bring your youngest brother unto me":

Upon their return for more corn.

"So shall your words be verified":

That they were true men, and had no ill design upon the land, but were come only to buy corn.

"And ye shall not die": As spies, which they were otherwise threatened with; and as it is customary in all nations to put such to death when found out.

"And they did so":

They left one of their brethren behind; they carried corn to their houses or families in Canaan, and brought their brother Benjamin with them when they returned to Egypt.

This may seem cruel, but we must remember what happened to him.

This was not vengeance; this was teaching them a lesson.

Joseph was in the dungeon approx. three years, so he allowed them to spend three days.

He still was concerned about their families, and sent them corn.

They should have realized who he was, when he said, "I fear God."

They were not expecting to see Joseph, so they didn't notice.

Genesis 42:21 "And they said one to another, We [are] verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."

"And they said one to another":

Before they went out of the prison, at least while in the presence of Joseph.

"We are verily guilty concerning our brother":

Meaning Joseph, whom they had sold for a slave, and who they supposed was dead through grief and hard servitude.

Now being in trouble their selves, it brings to mind the sin they had been guilty of, which, though committed twenty two years ago, was still fresh in their memories, and that lay heavy on their consciences.

For length of time neither makes sin less, nor the conscience lighter, when it is revived and charged home upon it, and which was aggravated particularly by the following circumstance.

"In that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear":

The brothers had steeled their hearts when selling Joseph to the Midianites (37:28-29), but they could not forget the fervent pleading and terror-filled voice of the teenager dragged away as a slave from home.

Reuben reminded them of his warning at that time and the consequence.

When in the utmost agony, with trembling limbs, and quivering lips, and floods of tears, as they stripped him of his coat, he most earnestly and importunately requested of them they would not put him into the pit, and leave him there.

And in the same manner entreated them they would not put him into the hands of strangers, but restore him alive to his father; but they turned a deaf ear to all his cries and entreaties, and hardened themselves against him.

"Therefore is this distress come upon us":

The same measure that was measured by them to him was now measured to them again.

They cast Joseph into a pit, and now they were committed to a prison.

They would not attend to his cries and tears, and the anguish of his soul did not move their pity, and now he is unremitting to them, and will not at least appear to have any compassion on them, or show pity to them; and perhaps their being dealt with in this similar way brought to their remembrance what they had done.

They suddenly realized this was punishment for what they did to Joseph.

They still did not know that this was Joseph.

The first step to salvation is being convicted in our hearts of our sins.

We must know we have sinned, before we ask forgiveness.

Genesis 42:22 "And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

"And Reuben answered them":

Being the eldest, and who had been most concerned for the life of Joseph, and most tender and careful of him.

"Saying, spake I not unto you, saying, do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear?"

It seems by this that Reuben endeavored to dissuade his brethren from selling Joseph, when they first proposed it, to which they would not listen.

Since it is certain they did hearken to him as not to kill him directly, as they first decided, and they hearkened to him to cast him into a pit, where he did not intend he should continue, but till he had an opportunity of taking him out, and returning him to his father.

But it seems probable that Reuben was with them when they first spied the Ishmaelites, and proposed to sell Joseph to them, which he objected to, and entreated they would not do it.

Perhaps he went out from them, and took a walk, with a view to get to the pit and take Joseph out, but before he got there his brethren had taken him out, and sold him.

Or this may refer to the general advice he always gave them, to do nothing that might endanger the life of Joseph, or be the means of his death, which selling him for a slave he supposed that he had been.

"Therefore, behold, also, his blood is required":

The Targum of Jonathan adds, "of us"; they were accessories to his death, and guilty of it.

For Reuben supposed he was dead, and now they must suffer for it, as a just retaliation, being threatened with death unless they could clear themselves.

This declaration referred to the death penalty (9:5).

Genesis 42:23 "And they knew not that Joseph understood [them]; for he spake unto them by an interpreter."

"And they knew not that Joseph understood them":

For what is above related they spoke in his presence and hearing.

But speaking to one another in the Hebrew language, and he being an Egyptian, as they took him to be, they did not imagine that he could understand them.

Therefore, were not at all upon their guard in what they said.

"For he spake unto them by an interpreter":

Which he the rather chose to do, that they might have no suspicion of him; and which shows, that though there was a likeness between the Hebrew language and the Egyptian in many things.

Yet in some they differed, and the difference was such that there was need of an interpreter, where the parties did not understand both languages.

This interpreter between Joseph and his brethren, according to the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, was Manasseh, the eldest son of Joseph, and so Jarchi; which is very improbable, he being but a child at this time, if not an infant (see Gen. 41:50).

Joseph was aware of their repentant heart.

He still had not revealed himself to them.

Genesis 42:24 "And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes."

"And he turned himself about from them, and wept":

Hearing his brethren confess their sin and guilt to one another in selling him, and Reuben's affectionate concern for him, it worked so much upon his affections, being naturally of a tender spirit, that he could no longer act the part he had, and keep up the sternness and severity of his countenance.

Certainly this does not characterize a man of hate.

Wherefore he turned his face from them, that they might not discern it, and his back upon them, and went into another room.

After he had given vent to his passion, and composed himself.

"And returned to them again, and communed with them":

Upon the same subject, of going with their corn to Canaan, and bringing their youngest brother with them upon their return, and promising moreover, for their encouragement, a free traffic in the land of Egypt (Gen. 42:34).

"And took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes":

He kept hostage not Reuben the firstborn, but Simeon, the oldest brother, who willingly participated in the crime against Joseph (37:21-31).

Who perhaps was the most cruel and hardhearted among them; and it appears from the affair of Shechem, that he was a man of a fierce and bloody disposition.

According to Jarchi, it was he that said to Levi, on sight of Joseph, behold this dreamer cometh; and that it was he that cast him into the pit.

And, as the Targum says, advised to kill him: and perhaps Joseph might cast fear upon him as the hostage, not only because he had used him more evilly than the rest, but because he might observe he was less concerned, and not so much humbled now for the evil he had done as the rest of them were.

As also he might choose to detain him, as being not so much in his father's affection, because of the affair of Shechem, and so be a less affliction to him than if it was another.

Besides, he might fear that being of a perverse and boisterous disposition, he would vehemently oppose the sending of Benjamin into Egypt, which Joseph was so very desirous of.

And he bound him in their presence to terrify them, and let them know what they must expect if they did not obey his orders, and the more to humble them for the sin they had been guilty of.

It was now upon their minds; though perhaps, as Jarchi observes, when they were gone he let him out, and gave him food and drink.

Or however might give him some liberty, and use him with mildness and gentleness.

Joseph could not contain himself.

His compassion was great, but he had to continue to teach them a lesson.

He would just go into another room, and they could not see him crying for them.

Genesis 42:25 "Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them."

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn":

Which was as much as they came for.

"And to restore every man's money into his sack":

The money paid by each for his quantity of corn delivered to him, not into the person's hands, but to be put into his sack privately, and unknown to him.

"And to give them provision for the way":

Sufficient both for themselves and for their cattle, that they might carry the whole of what corn they bought to their families

"And thus did he unto them":

That is, not Joseph, but his steward or deputy, or however the servant that he gave the above order to.

Genesis 42:26 "And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence."

"And they laded their asses with the corn":

Cattle very fit to carry burdens, and no doubt they had each of them one at least.

"And departed thence":

From the place where Joseph was, and from the land of Egypt.

Genesis 42:27 "And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it [was] in his sack's mouth."

"And as one of them opened his sack":

According to the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi, this was Levi; but Aben Ezra thinks it is more likely to be Reuben the firstborn, who was one, that is, the first of them.

"To give his ass provender in the inn":

At which they lay very probably the first night of their journey; a good man regards the life of his beast, and takes care of that as well as of himself, and generally in the first place.

"He espied his money":

The money which he paid for his corn.

"For, behold, it was in his sack's mouth":

Just as he opened it.

Genesis 42:28 "And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, [it is] even in my sack: and their heart failed [them], and they were afraid, saying one to another, What [is] this [that] God hath done unto us?"

"God hath done unto us":

Their guilty conscience and fear of vengeance from God surfaced again in this response to the money with which they had purchased the grain being returned and found in the one sack which had been opened.

Later, upon discovering all their money had been returned, their fear increased even further (verse 35).

When they were on their way, one of them discovered his money:

"And their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying ... what is this that God hath done unto us?"

Joseph's plan was working.

They recognized the cause of all this.

It is interesting that salvation is a free gift.

We cannot buy it.

The salvation of these brothers and their families was free, too.

Don't you know they were frightened by all of this?

There is no way they could understand at this point.

Look to the spiritual through these brothers, and see the sinful and dying world.

See through Joseph how God had provided a way out.

We also, must seek God to see the way out of our situation.

A repentant heart is the first step to receiving help.

Genesis 42:29 "And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying,"

"And they came unto Jacob their father, unto the land of Canaan":

Without being pursued and taken back, or detained in their journey as they might fear.

"And told him all that befell unto them":

Chiefly what befell them while in Egypt.

Genesis 42:30 "The man, [who is] the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country."

"The man, who is the lord of the land":

Of Egypt; not the king, but the deputy governor of it.

Whose authority under Pharaoh was very great, and reached to the whole land, and all political affairs, and especially what related to the corn, and the sale of it.

"Spake roughly to us":

Gave them hard words, and stern looks, and used them in a very rough manner (see Gen. 42:7).

"And took us for spies of the country":

Laid such a charge against them, and treated them as such; or "gave" them, committed them to prison as such.

Genesis 42:31 "And we said unto him, We [are] true [men]; we are no spies:"

"And we said unto him, we are true men":

Honest, upright men, not given to treacherous and treasonable practices, either in the country where they lived, or any other.

They came to Egypt with no ill design upon the country, only to buy corn for the relief of their families in necessity.

"We are no spies":

Or never were.

They had never been guilty of such practices, and never charged with anything of that kind. They denied the charge, and detested the character.

Genesis 42:32 "We [be] twelve brethren, sons of our father; one [is] not, and the youngest [is] this day with our father in the land of Canaan."

"We be twelve brethren, sons of our father":

All brethren by the father's side, though not by the mother's, and by one father; they had been twelve, and were so now, although they knew it not, and supposing that one was dead, as is next observed by them.

"One is not; is not alive, but dead":

The Targum of Jonathan is, "what is become of one we know not".

"And the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan" (see Gen. 42:13).

Genesis 42:33 "And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye [are] true [men]; leave one of your brethren [here] with me, and take [food for] the famine of your households, and be gone:"

"And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, hereby shall I know that you are true men":

This will be a proof and demonstration of it.

"Leave one of your brethren here with me":

As a hostage; they do not say "bound in the prison" (Gen. 42:19), as Joseph did, because that would grieve their father.

At least would not tell him of it at once, lest it should too much affect him.

"And take food for the famine of your household, and be gone":

That is, corn for the relief of their families, being distressed with a famine.

Genesis 42:34 "And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye [are] no spies, but [that] ye [are] true [men: so] will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land."

"And, bring your youngest brother unto me":

Their brother Benjamin.

"Then shall I know that you are no spies, but that you are true men":

He knew they were no spies now, but true, honest, upright men, with respect to any designs upon the country.

But then he should own and acknowledge them to be such, having such plain proof that what they said was true.

"So will I deliver your brother":

Their brother Simeon, who was left bound.

Though this circumstance they also here studiously conceal from their father.

"And ye shall traffic in the land":

Not only for corn, but for any other commodity Egypt furnished its neighbors with.

They reported to Jacob all that had happened.

Genesis 42:35 "And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money [was] in his sack: and when [both] they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."

"And it came to pass, as they emptied their sacks":

Both those in which were the corn they had bought, and those in which were their provender for their cattle, and provision for themselves.

"That, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack":

The same purse, and the same pieces of money, gold or silver, they had paid to the steward.

"And when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid":

The Targum of Jonathan adds, "because of Simeon, whom they had left there; fearing that they should be charged with theft or fraud, and that Simeon would be put to death.

They had opened their sacks before, and found their money in them, but put it up again as it was, in order to open them in their father's presence.

From whom they thought proper to conceal this circumstance, lest he should blame them for not returning to the governor with their money upon the first notice of it, when they had travelled but one day's journey.

Wherefore they make no mention of it in the account of things that befell them, and express their surprise and fear upon finding it when they opened their sacks, as if they had known, nothing of

it before; though it may be their fears were renewed and increased by what Jacob might observe to them, as the consequence of it, which they had not so thoroughly considered before.

Genesis 42:36 "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved [of my children]: Joseph [is] not, and Simeon [is] not, and ye will take Benjamin [away]: all these things are against me."

Jacob could not handle the prospect of losing another son, and didn't trust the brothers who had already divested him of two sons by what he may have thought were their intrigues.

"And ye will take Benjamin away":

They were desirous of it, and what their design was he could not tell; he seems to have a strong suspicion that it was not good.

"All these things are against me":

Against his will, his peace, and comfort, and happiness, though they were all working and would work as they did for his good, and for the good of his family, for the preservation of it during the seven years of famine.

Or are "upon me", as heavy burdens, too heavy for him to bear, and were ready to sink him down to the earth.

The whole situation overwhelmed Jacob who complained against his sons (43:6), and would not release Benjamin (verse 38).

The father did not know the how or why, but his statement above shows he blamed the other sons with Joseph's apparent death.

Genesis 42:37 "And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again."

"And Reuben spoke unto his father":

Being the eldest son, it most property lay upon him to make answer to his father in the name of his brethren, and to offer a word of comfort to him.

"Saying, slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee":

Not meaning Simeon, who was in Egypt, but Benjamin, whom it was proposed to take there, and whom Jacob was very loath to part with.

And to persuade him, Reuben offers to him, and gives him leave to slay his two sons, or rather two of his sons, since he had four (Gen. 46:9); if he did not bring Benjamin again to him.

This was a strange proposal, for what were two grandsons of his to his own son, so exceedingly beloved by him?

Besides, to lose his own son, and to have two of his grandchildren slain, would have been an increase of his sorrow and grief, instead of being an alleviation of it.

The always salutary Reuben generously made his father an offer easy to refuse, and that was the killing of his grandsons!

But Reuben's meaning was, not that his children should be slain, but this he says, to show that he would be as careful and solicitous for the return of Benjamin as if the life of two sons of his lay at stake.

He was so confident of it that he could risk the life of them upon it, which was as dear to him as one Benjamin was to his father.

"Deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again":

He undertook to be responsible for him.

Genesis 42:38 "And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"And he said, my son shall not go down with you":

He gives a peremptory denial; this was his then present resolution and determination.

"For his brother is dead; meaning Joseph, Benjamin's own brother by father and mother's side":

Him he supposed to be dead, such circumstances being related and produced, which made it highly probable, and he had not heard anything of him for twenty two years.

"And he is left alone":

Benjamin being the only surviving child of his dearly beloved Rachel, as he thought.

"If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go":

That is, to Egypt, whether by thieves and robbers, or by the fatigue of the journey or by any means whatever, so that he loses his life.

All the Targums interpret this mischief of death.

"Then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave":

The sense is, should this be the case he should never lift up his head, or have any more comfort in this world, but should pass his time with continual sorrow until his gray head was laid in the grave, or till he came to the state of the dead.

Jacob had been so deeply hurt for over twenty years at the loss of Joseph.

Now they were asking for the only other son of his beloved Rachel.

All of this had deeply hurt Jacob, and he would not do it.

Genesis Chapter 42 Questions

1. Why did Jacob send to Egypt for corn?
2. Who did he send?
3. Which one stayed home?
4. What was the only important thing at this point?
5. How long had it been since these brothers had seen Joseph?
6. What position did Joseph hold in Egypt?
7. What fulfillment of prophecy occurred when the brothers came before Joseph?
8. Were they aware of who Joseph was?
9. Why?
10. Joseph being rejected by his brethren and being made ruler of
11. Egypt, was a type and shadow of whom?
12. Joseph told them they would not go forth until what happened?
13. How long did he imprison them?
14. Why did Joseph choose this amount of time?
15. What statement did Joseph make that should have revealed who he was?
16. When he released them, what did he require them to do?
17. If this was not vengeance on Joseph's part, what was it?
18. When do they suddenly realize their anguish is because of what they did to Joseph?

19. Why did they not know Joseph could understand what they said?
20. What emotional effect did this have on Joseph?
21. Besides the corn, what did Joseph restore?
22. When did they realize they had the second thing?
23. What is the first step to receiving forgiveness?
24. When they saw their father, what did they do?
25. When they emptied their sacks and found all the money, what did they feel?
26. What was Jacob's reaction when they asked to take Benjamin?
27. What did Reuben offer as security to prove he would bring Benjamin back?
28. Would Jacob let him go?