

Genesis 41-42

Bible Study

Review

Chapter 38

Through Judah and Tamar were born children: Zerah and Pharez
The descendents of Perez would be David and Christ...this chapter gives us the origin of that lineage

Chapter 39

Joseph is wrongfully accused by Potiphar's wife of misconduct and he is thrown into prison, but God was with him and he prospered and was put into authority under the keeper of the prison

Chapter 40

Joseph listens and interprets the dreams of the Pharaoh's chief butler and baker who were also in prison...the interpretation was good for the chief butler but not for the baker



Genesis 40:20-23

²⁰Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was Pharaoh's birthday*, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

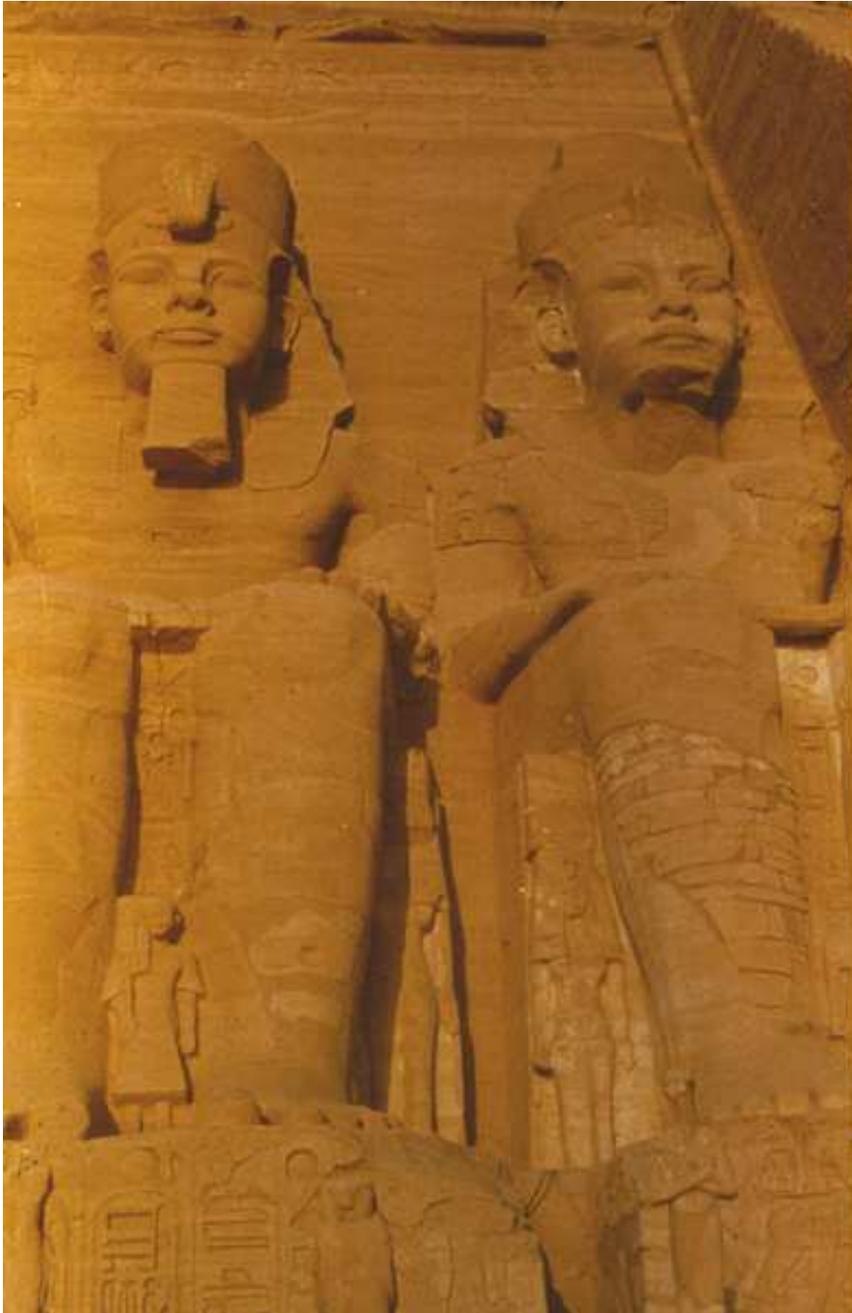
²¹Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

²²But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

²³Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

(Gen. 40:20) “Pharaoh’s birthday”

Who was this Pharaoh?



It could have been:

Pharaoh –Sesostris II (Greek name)
Senusret/ Senwosret (Egyptian name)

(Kingdom of Priests, A History of Old
Testament Israel, Eugene Merrill)

“His (Joseph’s) imprisonment would
have occurred under **Sesostris II** (1897-
1878), about a decade after his arrival
in Egypt [1889]”

“It was Sesostris whose dreams he
interpreted and whom he served as a
high government official”

(Zondervan Bible Backgrounds commentary)
“Those who feel a precise chronology
can be derived from the biblical record
place Joseph in the reign of Amenemhet
II or Senusret **Sesostris II**”

Chapter 41

God uses two dreams to elevate Joseph from prison to a position at Pharaoh's court

(BKC) "Joseph had proven himself faithful to God and therefore fit for service"

Genesis 41:1

¹Then it came to pass, at the end of **two full years**, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by **the river**.

(Word) "about the time of Pharaoh's birthday, the 2nd anniversary of the cupbearer's release and Joseph's continued detention. Doubtless this date was significant for both Pharaoh and Joseph"

"stood by **the river**": The Nile—a god in Egypt

²Suddenly there came up out of the river seven **cows**, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

Cows symbolized Egypt and one of their principal gods—Isis...cows were also the emblem of fruitful nature

"The Lower Egyptian goddess Neith...was also associated with the goddesses Hathor and Isis, she is often manifested in the **form of a cow**" (Encyclopedia of Ancient Civilizations, Arthur Cotterell)

(Companion) "In the Egyptian 'book of the dead' Osiris is represented as a **bull**, accompanied by **seven cows**. This was the basis of the dream, and gave it such significance and meaning"



Cows symbolized Egypt and one of their principal gods—Isis



(Halley's) "Of all the animals, the bull was the most sacred. Incense and sacrifice were offered before the sacred bull"

"Osiris is represented as a bull accompanied by **seven** cows" (Companion)

³Then behold, **seven** other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river.

⁴And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the **seven** fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke.

(Word) “Throughout the ancient world, ‘**seven**’ was a sacred number, sometimes **symbolizing fate**”

⁵He slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly **seven** heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good.

⁶Then behold, **seven** thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

⁷And the **seven** thin heads devoured the **seven** plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was a dream*.

The 2nd dream was similar to the 1st but the difference was heads of grain instead of cows...the number **seven** figured in the second dream as well

Egypt was a breadbasket for the Middle East, known as much for its grain as cattle—grain figures into this dream

⁸Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the **magicians** of Egypt and all its wise men.
And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was no one* who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

'magicians' (Zondervan Bible Background) "refer to the specialists centered in the 'house of life' where the dream interpretation manuals were stored and studied"

'wise men'—scholars of the middle east court , skilled in pagan religion

⁹Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day.

¹⁰When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker,

¹¹we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream.

¹²Now there *was* a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream.

¹³And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

¹⁴Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

¹⁵And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and *there is no one who can interpret it.* But I have heard it said of you *that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.*”

Pharaoh desperately wanted his dream interpreted, since his wise men and magicians could not

¹⁶So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “*It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*”

(NSB) “There is a strong emphasis on the word God. Joseph praised the power of the living God in the pagan court of Pharaoh.

He would not take credit for his ability to interpret dreams or use his innocence to plead for his freedom”

Pharaoh explains his dream to Joseph:

¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river.

¹⁸Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

¹⁹Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt.

²⁰And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows.

²¹When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.

²²Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.

²³Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, *and* blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

²⁴And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was* no one who could explain *it* to me.”

Pharaoh finishes explaining the dream to Joseph, then Joseph precedes to give the interpretation



²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do:

²⁶The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one.

²⁷And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine.

²⁸This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.

The interpretation now becomes **prophetic**:



²⁹Indeed seven years of great plenty **will come** throughout all the land of Egypt;

³⁰but after them seven years of famine **will arise**, and all the plenty **will be** forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.

³¹So the plenty **will not** be known in the land because of the famine following, for it **will be** very severe.

³²And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because **the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.**

(NSB) “Again Joseph testified to the living God in a pagan court. God sent the dreams; God enabled Joseph to understand them....

[v. 32] He made it clear he was speaking about **the one God**, not the numerous false gods that filled the Egyptian court, or even Pharaoh himself who was believed to be a god”

³³“Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him **over the land of Egypt.**”

(Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Commentary)

“Senusret III is known for reducing the power of the Nomarchs [provincial governors] to restore a more centralized government”

³⁴Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.

“collect one-fifth of the produce of the land”

(JFB) “of the land produce to be purchased or levied as a tax and stored by the government, instead of being sold to foreign corn merchants”

³⁵And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

³⁶Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

(Barnes) “In addition to the fifth, large purchases of grain were made by the government out of the surplus produce of the country”

³⁷So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

³⁸And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* **the Spirit of God?**”

(Word) “This is the 2nd use of the phrase ‘**God’s spirit**’ in Genesis –first in [1:2]. Wisdom is frequently seen as one of the gifts of God’s spirit, so Pharaoh’s question is an invitation to look for someone ‘discerning and wise’ and foreshadows his choice of Joseph, **whose words have proved God speaks through him**”

(BKC) “Centuries later Daniel was chosen to be the 3rd highest ruler in Babylon for the same reason”
[Daniel 5: 7, 14]

2 Peter 1:21

²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but [£]holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you.

⁴⁰You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

⁴¹And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

Pharaoh then appoints Joseph by **official ceremony** [v. 42]



⁴²Then Pharaoh took his **signet ring** off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in **garments** of fine linen and put a **gold chain** around his neck.

The **signet ring** delegated him the power of prime minister or vizier....

The **garments** were the robe of high office worn by the priests...

The **gold chain** was a badge of office or nobility worn by the prime minister

⁴³And he had him ride in the **second chariot** which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁴Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

v. 43

the **chariot** of the 2nd man in Egypt.....he is 2nd in power only to Pharaoh [v. 44]

(Exploring Ancient Egypt, Ian Shaw)

"The powers of the provincial governors at places like Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt became severely reduced starting around the reign of Senusret III"

⁴⁵And Pharaoh called Joseph's name **Zaphnath-Paaneah**. And he gave him as a wife **Asenath**, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

Zaphnath-Paaneah (Egyptian)= preserver of life

(The Bible is History, Ian Wilson)

“One little-documented chancellor of the period, **Ankhu**, rather neatly matches British Egyptologist Professor Kenneth Kitchen's deduction that Joseph's Biblically quoted Egyptian name was originally Zat-en-aph Pa'aneah, or *'he-who-is called Ankhu'*”

Asenath= she belongs to the goddess Neit

(Word) “Marriage into one of the top Egyptian families set a **seal** on Joseph's promotion”

(Barnes) “Priests were the highest and most privileged class in Egypt”

(Tanakh translation Jewish study Bible)

‘Since Jewish law does not recognize any marriage between a Jew and a Gentile, Jewish tradition came to interpret **Asenath** as the proto-typical convert to Judaism’

v. 45 (Middle part)

“the daughter of **Poti-Pherah**
priest of On”

On
(Heliopolis)

Poti-Pherah= he who worships
the sun

He was the priest of On, a city
dedicated to the worship of the
sun, also known as Heliopolis



(JFB) “The priests formed the highest order of nobility”

(Matthew Henry) “He married him honorably to a prince’s daughter. Where God had been liberal in giving wisdom and other merits, Pharaoh was not sparing in conferring honors”

➤ Joseph was highly honored: by Pharaoh's giving him the daughter of a prominent Egyptian official

⁴⁶Joseph was **thirty years old** when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

17 years old—Joseph sold into slavery...now **30 years** old—he had been 13 years in slavery

(Matthew Poole) “Joseph’s age is here noted to teach us: that Joseph’s short affliction was recompensed with a much longer prosperity, even for **eighty** years”

⁴⁷Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly.

⁴⁸So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.

⁴⁹Joseph gathered very much grain, **as the sand of the sea**, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable.

Pharaoh’s dreams were fulfilled as Joseph had interpreted them..... and they stored crops from an abundant harvest

v. 49 ‘as the sand of the sea’

(NIV study Bible) “a simile also for the large number of offspring promised to Abraham and Jacob” [22:17; 32:12]

⁵⁰And to Joseph were born **two sons** before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

⁵¹Joseph called the name of the firstborn [£]**Manasseh**: “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.”

⁵²And the name of the second he called [£]**Ephraim**: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Manasseh= forget

God enabled Joseph to forget his slavery and affliction.....**and** made him fruitful
In Egypt

Ephraim= fruitful

An expression of the promises, and prophecy –Ephraim became one of the largest tribes [Deut. 23:17]

(Word) “Both names, Ephraim and Manasseh, express Joseph’s thankfulness to God.

In one God is praised as the one who preserves, in the other as the one who blesses; both confirm the promise ‘I am with you’ [39:2-5, 21-23]”

⁵²And the name of the second he called [£]Ephraim: “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the **land of my affliction.**”

v. 52 (last part)

‘in the land of my affliction’ —points to his descendents

Exodus 3:7

⁷And the Lord said: “I have surely seen the **oppression** of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

¹⁷and I have said I will bring you up out of the **affliction** of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”

⁵³Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,

⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

⁵⁵So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.

⁵⁶The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened [£]all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

⁵⁷So **all countries came** to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.

Joseph’s plan of storing grain (inspired by God) saves Egypt from famine and became a **relief center** for neighboring countries in the middle east

Chapter 42

20 years have gone by from Joseph's imprisonment to his rise as governor of Egypt

And that Jacob was without his favorite son Joseph

Genesis 42:1-5

¹When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"

²And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

³So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

⁴But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

⁵And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Jacob did not send Benjamin, **Rachel's** other son—shows what Jacob suspected of the other sons and their character...maybe they might harm Benjamin also

⁶Now Joseph *was* governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the earth.

Joseph's prophetic dreams were coming to pass (the sheaves and the stars) bow down to him [37:7, 9]....what the brothers had tried to prevent

⁷Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

⁸So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

v. 7 'spoke roughly to them'—spoke with the authority and tone of the governor

v. 8 'they did not recognize him'

(JFB) "They were full grown men—he was but a lad at parting. They were in their usual garb—he was in his official robes. They never dreamt of him as the governor of Egypt, while he had been expecting them"

⁹Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You *are* spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

¹⁰And they said to him, “No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.

¹¹We *are* all one man’s sons; we *are* honest *men*; your servants are not spies.”

¹²But he said to them, “No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land.”

¹³And they said, “Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today, and one *is* no more.”

Four times Joseph accuses his brothers of being **spies** (v. 9, 12, 14, 16)

(NSB) “They were standing before a man has absolute power...at his word they could be executed”

(Bible Backgrounds Commentary) “Semites/ Asiatics were often distrusted by the Egyptians, so this is not an unusual charge....economic motives would be more logical than military ones...fields and storehouses could be plundered”

¹⁴But Joseph said to them, “It *is* as I spoke to you, saying, ‘You *are* spies!’

¹⁵In this *manner* you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

¹⁶Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!”

¹⁷So he put them all together in prison three days.

v. 15 he tested the brothers—wanting to make sure they had not treated Benjamin like they had done to him...he demanded they bring Benjamin to Egypt...while they get a taste of imprisonment

¹⁸Then Joseph said to them the third day, “Do this and live, *for* I fear God:

¹⁹If you *are* honest *men*, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

²⁰And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.”
And they did so.

v. 18 ‘for I fear God’

(NSB) “Joseph gave his brothers a clue about who he was. In effect , Joseph told them: ‘I fear the one God”

▪Quite a statement from the governor of Egypt

²¹Then they said to one another, “**We are truly guilty** concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and **we would not hear**; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

²²And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.”

(JFB) “The drift of their conversation is one of the most striking instances of the power of conscience on record”

²³But they did not know that Joseph understood *them*, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

²⁴And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

v. 24 'he took Simeon'—Reuben had defended him years before, so Joseph took the next oldest as hostage

200 mile journey from Egypt to Hebron
Six or seven days journey

²⁵Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

²⁶So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

²⁷But as one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

²⁸So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed *them* and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What *is* this *that* God has done to us?"

(Word) "They saw the hand of God upon them in judgment"

²⁹Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying:

³⁰“The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

³¹But we said to him, ‘We *are* honest *men*; we are not spies.

³²We *are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no *more*, and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.’

³³Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you *are* honest *men*: Leave one of your brothers *here* with me, take *food for* the famine of your households, and be gone.

³⁴And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that you are* honest *men*. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

The brothers tell their story to Jacob...however they **omit**:

- Their imprisonment for three days
- Possible execution if Benjamin does not go to Egypt
- That money was found in their sacks

Also, Trading freely in the land v. 34 (last part) was not part of the bargain

(Word) “He [Jacob] must have thought, ‘Whatever they say, Simeon has not come home and Benjamin is now being demanded’”

³⁵Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

³⁶And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

³⁷Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

³⁸But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

v. 37 "kill my two sons"

(JFB) "This was a thoughtless and unwarrantable condition—one that he never seriously expected his father would accept. It was designed only to give assurance of the greatest care being taken of Benjamin"

(NSB) "Reuben took the lead. He tried to comfort his father, just as he had tried to stop his brothers from hurting Joseph"

Jacob had lost enough sons—he would not permit Benjamin to leave

Lessons

Chapter 41

Joseph was a 'type' of Christ who **suffered** but afterwards received glory—an example for all disciples

Chapter 42

(BKC) “Joseph’s tests were important in God’s plan to bless the seed of Abraham. ...it was necessary that the brothers **be tested before they could participate in God’s blessing**”



The same for disciples in the Church today