

Lesson 8: Joseph and His Brothers

Reading Preparation:

- Genesis 37-50

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Lesson Notes:

[1. Joseph's Early Years](#)

[1.1. Introduction To Joseph](#)

Joseph is the first son born to Jacob's second wife, Rachel. Joseph will have eleven brothers. His father's first wife, Leah, will bear six sons and her handmaiden, Zilpah will bear two sons. Rachel will give birth to only two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, She will die while giving birth to Benjamin. Her handmaiden, Bilah will also bear her two sons.

Allan K. Burgess states,

"Joseph, the son of Jacob, was one of the most righteous men who even lived, yet the first thirty years of his life were filled with heartache and adversity. However, rather than blame God for the negative things that happened to him, Joseph remained faithful and received great spiritual and physical blessings." (New Insights Into the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993, 64).

Joseph was an amazing individual who continued to be obedient to all the Lord required of him, despite difficulties and hardships that were most horrendous. He is an example to each of us of the blessings that will come to those who persevere and remain obedient.

[1.2. Coat of Many Colors](#)

Joseph receives a coat from his father.

Genesis 37:3

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"The Greek Septuagint word indicates many colours, but the Hebrew term may indicate simply a long coat with sleeves" (Genesis 37: 3c footnote).

"There are some questions as to what Joseph's coat actually was... One noted scholar supposed by Bush...[it] to have been the badge of the birthright which had been forfeited by Reuben and transferred to Joseph. If indeed this coat signaled that Joseph held the birthright, which may have been in question among the brothers because there were four firstborn sons in Jacob's family, this fact would explain the intense hostility and jealousy the coat provoked among the others sons of Jacob". (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second edition, Revised, 1981], 93).

1.3. Jealousy of Brothers

It is possible the brothers did not clearly understand the right of the birthright blessing was to go to Joseph.

Here are some possible arguments that five of the sons could make:

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"Reuben: He was the firstborn of all the sons. Although he had lost the right, he may not have accepted that fact.

"Simeon: Since he was the second son of Leah and next in line following Reuben, he could have assumed the birthright would come to him after Reuben lost his right to it.

"Judah: He could have argued that not only Reuben had lost the right, but so had Simeon and Levi, through the massacre of the Shechemites. The disqualification of these sons would make him the rightful legal heir.

"Dan: Because his mother, Bilhah, was considered Rachel's property, he could argue that he was Rachel's firstborn, not Joseph, and therefore should have received the birthright when Reuben lost it.

"Gad: He was the firstborn son of Zilpah and therefore could easily have thought he should have taken the birthright after Reuben forfeited it." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition , Revised, 1981], 87).

It is important to understand the sins of immorality plagued three members of Jacob's family. They include his daughter, Dinah [Genesis 34:1-12]; Reuben, his eldest son [Genesis 35:22]; and, Judah [Genesis 38:1-30].

The action of both Reuben and his brother, Judah, would have disqualified them from receiving the desired birthright blessing. Their actions will stand in direct contrast with their brother, Joseph. His resistance to the sexual overtures and seductions toward him by Potiphar's wife stands as an example to all of forbearance and complete fidelity to the law of chastity under most difficult circumstances.

We return to Joseph and the gift of a colorful coat by his father. While we may not know the color of the coat or even if it was clearly understood by each of the brothers that Joseph was to receive the birthright blessing, we do know that his brothers were aware of their father's feelings for him.

Genesis 37:4

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

There is yet another factor that must be considered regarding the jealousy of his brothers. It involves Joseph sharing two dreams he had with his family. One can only imagine the sharing of these dreams might have added fuel to already intense feelings.

Genesis 37:5, 7-11

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 ...And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 ...I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him...Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Not only do the sharing of these two dreams intensify the “hate” and “envy” of his brothers, it was also offensive to his father and he loved him.

1.4. Thrown Into A Pit

We are taught in the scriptures that we will be judged by our thoughts as well as our actions (see B/M, Alma 12: 14; Doctrine and Covenants 88:109; PGP, Moses 8:22). It is my opinion that there is a place in our minds where we can set our irrational thoughts aside and take no action. If, however, we continue to feed our mind with real or assumed injustices against another, we will then put our aberrant thoughts into action. The brothers of Joseph passed this junction when they saw him coming to see how they are doing.

Genesis 37: 18-20

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.
19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.
20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

There is one, Reuben, the oldest, who stands against his brother's evil proposal.

Genesis 37:21-24

21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.
22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.
23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;
24 And they took him and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

A second brother, Judah, now also proposes that they not kill him, but sell him in order to get gain thereby setting a price on Joseph's life,

Genesis 37:26-27

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?
27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.

Joseph's brothers now act as if Reuben is not present, probably feeding on the other's unjust actions for Joseph, and take the step of ridding themselves of their brother.

Genesis 37:28-29

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought into Joseph into Egypt.
29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

1.5. Brothers Try to Comfort Father But Blood On Their Hands

Their brother Joseph is now gone. The next step is what to tell their father? The plan they had originally devise when they were ready to kill him was to kill a sheep and to put the blood on Joseph's coat. They will return with the blood-drenched coat to show their father and let him draw his own conclusions. They now add deceit and lies to their list of crimes. Unfortunately, this pattern is not uncommon. One must now find a plausible explanation to cover the truth to explain their deceptive actions...not only to make their actions acceptable to others...but also to try and convince themselves.

What a hole we dig for ourselves when we give into our impetuous thoughts. Our thoughts now become our actions which we may now regret for the rest of our lives. We will later learn what price Joseph's brothers will pay for their

actions.

Genesis 37:32-35

**32 And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father;...
33 And he knew it, and said, it is my son' coat;...
34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son for many days.
35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted;...his father wept for him.**

Allan C. Burgess observes,

"What a farce this must have been—the brothers guiltily attempting to comfort their father, knowing that they were the cause of his mourning. His sons 'rose up to comfort him' but failed to do those things that would bring true comfort. They failed to tell Jacob that his son was still alive and made no attempt to follow the caravan and possibly bring Joseph back. Jacob's sons gave empty words in the place of healing actions." (New Insights Into the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993, 67-68).

Allan K. Burgess continues,

"This same problem exists in the homes of many families today. Some parents say they would do anything to have a better relationship with their children, yet they fail to give the time, interest, and patience that would bring this relationship about. Many children profess love for their parents and give them gifts on holidays and birthdays but fail to give the one gift the parents desire most—the gift of righteousness and obedience...So many times, family members give things instead of time and offer words instead of actions. Like Jacob's sons, they go through the motions of love and concern but don't give of themselves." (New Insights into the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993. 68).

2. Joseph Begins His Life In Egypt

While we may assume the family has been to Egypt before, for the most part Joseph is alone in a strange land whose customs, culture, language, and religion is different from his own. If you have ever been in a different land or culture from your own, you know what a strange sensation it is and how lonesome you can feel. I assume Joseph's feelings were similar.

2.1. Joseph Sold As Slave

Joseph's first real life experience in this strange land is to be taken to the slave market, where along with others, he is going to be offered for sale to the highest bidder. Joseph is "seventeen years old" (Genesis 37:2). How humiliating it must have been to be on display and examined by others, poked and prodded, with no right to object. He had been the favored son; had a beautiful robe with the honor this robe signified. Now everything has changed for him. He has been stripped of his coat; betrayed by his brothers, separated from his beloved father, and taken from all that is familiar to him. Everything is gone, including his freedom. He is now a slave! "How much" the man says, "am I bid for this strong and handsome young man?" The bidding begins. "I will pay," finally a man says. The auction is over. Joseph has been sold.

Genesis 39:1

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, and Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

The Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"Potiphar is noted to be officer of the Pharaoh's, and a captain of the guard, which in Hebrew literally means, 'chief of the butchers or slaughterers.' Other scholars believe the term is used as executioner, and thus Potiphar was the 'commanding officer of the royal bodyguard, who executed the capital sentences ordered by the king." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 94).

Regardless of Potiphar's position, the scriptures record,

Genesis 39:2-3

**2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.
3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.**

2.2. Potiphar's Wife

Potiphar is married and in his house presumably there are other slaves serving the needs of the family. It was Potiphar himself who saw in his slave boy special abilities coming from a divine source. It is important to remember Egyptians believed in many gods, not in one God as did Joseph. It is Joseph's divine relationship that brought him into Potiphar's house.

Genesis 39:7-8, 10, 12

7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8 But he refused,...

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Spencer W. Kimball states,

"The case of Potiphar's wife is an example of the creeping tentacles of sin. Even though this scheming did not succeed in defiling Joseph, her sin was most grievous. The intent was there and the desire and the lust and the coveting. She had already committed adultery with him in her heart and mind...' as she 'cast her eyes upon Joseph day by day.' This woman's transgression did not begin when she ripped the clothes from the body of this fleeing stalwart. Her perfidy had been born and nurtured in her mind and heart in the 'day by day of wanting him, teasing him, desiring him, lusting for him, and coveting him. Her sin was a progressive thing. So, for all the numerous people, who, like this seductive woman, carry in their hearts and minds designs or covering, deep sin lieth already at their doors." ("Spouses and None Else," in Conference Report, October, 1962, 55-60).

Potiphar's wife, now rejected, takes her revenge against the servant Joseph. She accused him of the very sin of which she herself is guilty in her heart. She speaks first to the men of the house about the fictitious attack and then to her husband,

Genesis 39:14-20

14 ...he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

15 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled..

16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:

18 And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

We must ask, "Why is Joseph not executed for this action?" This would certainly have been the sentence for a slave defiling his master's wife! We can only suggest that Potiphar himself suspected his wife was the seducer, not Joseph. It is also possible he cared for Joseph and did not want to see him put to death, so he chose imprisonment. It may be knowing Joseph's innocence, the Lord himself intervened in order to preserve Joseph's life. We do not know the correct explanation. We do know that Joseph who is innocent of the charges brought against him by Potiphar's wife, is condemned to prison. Once again he is condemned by others when he himself is innocent.

We all know how easy it is to be faithful when things are going well in our lives. It becomes most difficult, however, when you feel that your whole world is falling down around you. It is then the true character of the individual is visible to ourselves and others.

2.3. Prison and Dreams

Genesis 39:20-22

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

Was Joseph aware that whether he is placed in a pit by his brothers or being sold as a slave in a strange land or is accused of a crime he did not commit and then put in prison that God is with him? I don't know, but under these most difficult circumstances, Joseph remained faithful to his covenant with God.

Allan K. Burgess observes,

"There are four realms of freedom, and in order to be truly free, we need to be free in all four of these areas. The four areas of freedom are physical, emotional, spiritual and mental. Joseph's brothers were free physically, but they were not free in the other three areas. They lived in spiritual bondage; suffered spiritual, mental and emotional guilt; and knew they were not right with either their earthly father or their Heavenly Father. Joseph on the other hand, was now in physical bondage but was free in the other areas of his life. He was free from a guilty conscience; free to receive help, inspiration, and comfort from God; and felt comfortable with both himself and with the Lord." (New Insight into the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993, 72).

It is while Joseph is performing his duties in prison that he approaches two of the prisoners, and observes, "Wherefore look ye so sadly today?" (Gen. 39:7).

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"If there is any person had cause for discouragement and bitterness, it was Joseph...In the very midst of being faithful and holding true to that which is right, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison. How easy it would have been for him to give up, to say, 'What's the use of trying to serve God? All he does is punish me.' Joseph would have been like to many other people who become bitter over some real or imagined slight, or tragedy, and blame the Lord. There is no trace of bitterness, no blaming of the Lord. Joseph just continued being righteous and faithful." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 95).

Joseph learns two prisoners, the Pharaoh's chief butler and baker, are distraught because they have each had a dream but do not know the interpretation. Joseph offers his assistance.

Genesis 40:8

8 ...Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

The first dream involves a growing vine which brings forth grapes which the butler presses into the Pharaoh's cup. The interpretation from the Lord, is that in three days, the butler will be released from prison and restored by the Pharaoh to his former position of authority. Joseph requests that when the butler is released that he "think on me..." (Gen. 39:14).

The dream of the baker does not have such a happy conclusion. The baker has three baskets on his head and in the foremost basket the birds did come and eat the bread out of the baskets. The Lord's interpretation as given by Joseph is,

Genesis 40:19

19 Yet within three days shall the Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

The fulfillment of the dreams comes to pass exactly as Joseph had interpreted. The chief butler is restored to his position of authority and the chief baker is executed. In spite of Joseph providing the correct interpretation for the chief butler, he does not remember Joseph to the Pharaoh and Joseph continues to be held in prison. How long was he there?

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"Some have suggested that Joseph spent at least three years in prison and even more. Joseph was seventeen when he was sold by his brother and altogether he spends thirteen years with Potiphar and in prison. Finally, however, the chief butler does remember Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and he tells the Pharaoh." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 95).

3. Joseph and Pharaoh

The chief butler's memory of Joseph is raised when the Pharaoh himself dreams a dream that none of the court's experts are able to interpret.

Neil and Delitzsch in their commentary state,

"...surprise that the Pharaoh's magicians and wise men are not able to interpret the Pharaoh's dream. The cow is the symbol of Iris, the goddess of the all-sustaining earth, and in the hieroglyphics it represented the earth, agriculture, and food: and the Nile, by its overflowing, was the source of the fertility of the land. But, however, simple the explanation of the fat and lean cows ascending out of the Nile appears to be, it is the fate of the wisdom of this world, that where it suffices it is compelled to be silent. For it belongs to the government of God to close the lips of the eloquent, and take away the understanding of the aged (Job 12:20)." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 96).

3.1. Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's dream

The Pharaoh, upon learning from his chief butler, that a young Hebrew who is in prison can interpret dreams summons him to the palace. Once Joseph is washed and dressed he appears before the Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:15-16

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

God does hear Joseph's prayer and gives him the interpretation which will alter not only the life of those living in Egypt, and in the surrounding areas, but also Joseph's. Pharaoh's first dream is of seven fat cows and the seven lean cows who eat the seven fat cows. His second dream is of seven good ears and seven lean ears which destroy the seven good ears. The interpretation given by the Lord of the two dreams is that there will be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. Joseph then suggests how the dreams can serve as a warning so Egypt might be prepared for the pending famine. The Pharaoh is extremely pleased with Joseph's interpretation and recommendation.

Genesis 41:39-40

39 ...Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

The Pharaoh in an effort to further honor Joseph gave him a new name, "Zaphnath-paaneah" (Gen.41:45), and a wife named, "Asenath" (Gen.41:45).

George Horton Jr. states,

"The Pharaoh now gives Joseph a new name, Zaphnath-paaneah, which probably means, The God speaks, and He [the one who bears the name] Lives, and given a new bride, the great grandmother of most members of the Church—Asenath, daughter of Potipheah, priest of On." ("Joseph: A Legacy of Greatness," in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 71).

Joseph will have two sons by Asenath, who are named Manasseh, and Ephraim.

3.2. Joseph's Ten Brothers Come To Egypt

As the Lord, through Joseph, had interpreted Egypt enjoyed seven years of plenty. During these years, under Joseph's direction, grain and other food, was stored in anticipation of the seven lean years which would follow; and the resulting famine. The famine was so great that not only was Egypt affected, but all her neighbors, including the Israelites.

Genesis 42:3-5

3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren;...

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

The brothers, minus Benjamin, come to Egypt to buy corn for the family. Joseph as the governor is the one who attends to their purchase. They do not recognize him, but in respect for his office, bow down before him.

3.3. Joseph Tests Brothers

Rather than a smooth experience, Joseph accuses them of a crime against the nation.

Genesis 42:9

9 ...Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

The brothers will plead their innocence, maybe just as he had plead his innocence before them those many years before, but he does not rescind his accusation. The stronger they protest, the more adamant he is of their guilt. It is finally determined the only way they are to receive the desired food is to provide proof of their innocence.

Genesis 42:15

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

There is yet another requirement in order to prove their innocence.

Genesis 42:16

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.

The brothers are given three days to make their decision. Then they are to return to Joseph with their decision. However, prior to announcing their decision to Joseph, they talk amongst themselves.

Genesis 42:21-22

**21 And they said one to another, We are very 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.
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.**

Joseph has learned from his brothers that over the past thirteen years, they had suffered feelings of guilt for their actions toward him and his oldest brother, Reuben, had sought to protect his life. He also learns of the love they have for his youngest brother, Benjamin and their protective feelings towards him and his father. Joseph gains this information from the conversation of his brothers who have spoken in Hebrew assuming he does not understand Hebrew. Joseph then reacts to this revelation regarding their altered feelings.

Genesis 42:24

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.

Before the brothers leave, unbeknown to them, Joseph has the money they paid for their food placed in each of their saddlebags. He seeks to learn of their honesty when previously they had been so dishonest. They stop on their journey and one discovers the money in his bags!

Genesis 42:28-29

**28 ...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?
29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan and told him all that befell unto them;...**

They share their experience with their father who speaks to them of their losses.

Genesis 42:36

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.

Ruben offers to go to Egypt with Benjamin, and he will return with both Simeon and Benjamin. If he does not return, his father can slay his own two sons (see Genesis 42:37) Jacob's responds to his son's offer.

Genesis 42:38

38 ...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 shall go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

The decision is delayed. There will be no return trip to Egypt. The family will make do with whatever food they have remaining. The risk of harm to Jacob's sons is too great! The passage of time, however, forces a grieving father to make an important decision. Without the necessary food, the family will starve! The brothers including Benjamin, along with a present for the Egyptian governor, and double the money found in their bags, the brothers again make the necessary journey back to Egypt. When Joseph sees that they have returned with his brother, Benjamin, he invites all to dinner at his home.

Upon seeing the steward of Joseph's house, they reiterated again they had come to Egypt to purchase food, and were not spies. They also offered the money which they had found in their bags as well as money to buy food. The steward counsels them.

Genesis 43:23

23 And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

When Joseph returns home and meets with his brothers, he inquires as to the health of his father.

Genesis 43:28

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

Joseph's reaction to seeing his younger brother after these long years, is too much for him emotionally.

Genesis 43:30

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there.

As they prepare to eat together, his brothers are astonished for Joseph sat at the same table with them.

Genesis 43:32

32 ...because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

They spend the evening eating and enjoying their time together and then the brothers leave to return to Egypt. Joseph once again has his servant restore their money in their sacks and he has his own silver cup placed in the sack of Benjamin. The brothers have not gone far when the steward and others from the home intercept them and accuse them.

Genesis 44:4

4 ...Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

The brothers are once again accused of having taken the money they offered for food and also the governor's silver cup! They are so adamant this is a false charge they offer the life of the one who has done such a deed to be put to death! The cup is found in Benjamin's sack.

Genesis 44:13

13 Then they rent their clothes,...

Each knew the theft of the governor's cup meant certain death. They had set the punishment themselves. All they could do now is to plead for mercy!

Genesis 44:14

14 And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

Judah will now plead his case before Joseph in hope for mercy. He tells Joseph of his aged father and the love which he has for his youngest son. If his son does not return home, their father will die of grief. He tells Joseph he offered himself to his father as assurance his son would be protected and no harm would come to him.

Genesis 44:32-33

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

It is noteworthy that it is Judah who is the spokesman for Benjamin and not Reuben, the oldest? Remember it was Judah, who in Reuben's absence, presented the argument to his brothers that Joseph be sold into slavery? It was his words that brought the brothers to unity in their action against their brother. Now it is a different Judah who is now arguing for the life of his youngest brother and offering his own instead!

3.4. Joseph Shows Himself To His Brothers

The action of Judah combined with the change that has been brought into the lives of his brothers during this testing time by Joseph is over. Joseph sends his servants out of the room.

Genesis 45:1-5; 7-9

1 ...And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself know unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud:...

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph;...

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.

What joy must have filled Joseph's heart as he revealed to his brothers his identity. Likewise it must have brought great relief to his brothers to know Joseph was yet alive and he did not hold any feelings of animosity towards them. He saw only the hand of the Lord in his life and how, his coming to Egypt was under the direction of God.

Through the tests Joseph designed for his brothers they truly demonstrated they had learned their lesson and their actions indicated they had changed during the time of separation.

4. Jacob Comes To Egypt

Jacob's sons return from Egypt and tell him that his son Joseph is yet alive. Initially it is too much for Jacob to even hope this information is factual.

Genesis 45:26-28

26 And they told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived:

28 And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

I hope in the conversation that the brothers had with their father they also confessed the truth of their actions towards Joseph. While change in attitude and behavior are essential when we commit serious sins, lasting change does not completely occur until the sin is confessed to one who has the authority on behalf of God to forgive the act. Upon sincere repentance by the sinner, the sin is remembered no more by the Lord and peace, true peace, is restored to the sinner. While making the journey to Egypt, Jacob stops at Beer-sheba.

Genesis 46:1-3

**1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.
2 And God spake unto Israel in the vision of the night, ...
3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:**

The Lord surely did make of Jacob a great nation. Only seventy souls (Genesis 46:27), entered Egypt at the time of Joseph, and millions of Israelites left four hundred years later under Moses' direction!

4.1. Jacob Lives In Goshen

Acting upon Joseph's request, the Israelites are given the land of Goshen.

George Horton, Jr. states,

"The Nile delta was an ideal area for the foraging of flocks and herds. It was conducive to the herding life-style of the Israelites and would not have been as subject to the annual inundation as were other areas...Jacob lives here for another seventeen years (i.e., twelve beyond the famine) to see his children and grandchildren multiply and prosper." ("Joseph: A Legacy of Greatness," in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 78).

4.2. Jacob Blesses The Pharaoh

In Genesis 47:7, we learn the Pharaoh was anxious to meet Joseph's father and so Jacob meets with the Pharaoh. During this time the scriptures record that Jacob gave the Pharaoh a blessing.

Adam Clark states,

"7. Jacob blesses Pharaoh. Saluted him on his entrance with 'Peace be unto thee,' or some such expression of respect and goodwill" (Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible. Abridged by Ralph Earle. Grand Rapids, Michigan.: Baker Book House, 1967, [19th Printing, March, 1991], 81).

Given the importance of blessings to the Hebrews, and the esteem in which the Pharaoh held Joseph and his own statement to Joseph, "Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:" (Genesis 41:39), it would seem the blessing given by Jacob to the Pharaoh would be noteworthy.

Ellis T. Rasmussen observes,

There meeting "was an unusual interaction between a leader with earthly power and a man with divine power." (A Latter-Day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993, 77).

Genesis 47:7

7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

It is my belief that a blessing spoken by a Prophet of God to the head of a nation would surely contain words of admonition, counsel, and encouragement as he ruled his people, as well as a blessing of health and long life for himself and his family. Because God cares about all his children, He would convey a blessing upon all those who stand in positions of leadership their judgments may be done in righteousness.

4.3. Jacob Gives a Blessing To Joseph's Sons

Joseph, prior to his father's death, brings his two sons to receive a blessing from the aged Patriarch. Contrary to Joseph's expectation, the Patriarch places his right hand on the younger son, Ephraim and his left hand on Manasseh. Joseph protests.

Genesis 48:19

19 And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Ephraim and Manasseh are now "adopted" by Jacob as though they were his own, like Reuben and Simeon (Gen. 48:5). They are to receive an inheritance like the other tribes of Israel just as if they had been natural sons of Jacob.

Sidney B. Sperry states,

“Joseph’s place among the twelve and blessings accompanying it were swallowed up in the blessings of his two sons so there are but thirteen [Reuben lost his right through his wickedness] left to be accounted for. Later on, as the Pentateuch [First Five Books of the Old Testament] indicates, Levi was chosen to have the Lord for an inheritance and not to have an inheritance in the same sense as the others (Deuteronomy.10:8, 9; Joshua.13:14, 33). This leaves but twelve of the patriarchs to be formally accounted for and they are the progenitors of the so-called twelve tribes of Israel.” (The Spirit of the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 35).

The birthright blessing now passes to Ephraim (Jeremiah 31:9) through Joseph (1 Chronicles 5:1). Joseph not only receives a “double” land inheritance in Canaan, through Ephraim and Manasseh, but would also receive another land, North and South America, for the remnant of Joseph (Ether 13:8).

4.4. Jacob Blesses Judah and Joseph

While blessings are conferred upon his sons, along with words of admonition, the blessings of Judah and Joseph stand out in comparison.

Victor L. Ludlow clarifies,

“The tribe of Judah received three special promises under the hand of Jacob (Gen.49:9-10): (1) Judah would be a tribe of courageous warriors; (2) The kingdom of Judah would remain intact until the coming of the Messiah. (They were to intact as a social group and political entity under the Romans when Jesus was born, and they have maintained their identity and are again a political power in these last days before his second coming.), and (3) The Messiah would come from this tribe riding on a donkey. (Zech. 9:9; Matt.21:2-5.).” (Unlocking the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 18).

Victor L. Ludlow continues,

“Joseph received from Jacob many special promises that covered a number of conditions that would come upon his descendants. They include (Gen.49:22-26): (1) His posterity would go beyond Canaan unto the everlasting hills (in America); (2) His descendants would be subjected to war, but they would be blessed of the Lord and be victorious in the end; (3) His tribe would receive the blessings of heaven (spirit paradise?) above; (4) His tribe would receive the blessings of the deep (missionary work in spirit prison?) below; (5) His descendants would have the blessings of breast and wombs (great fertility and strength), and (6) His tribe would carry on the blessings of the fathers (the birthright)” the fathers.” (Unlocking the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 18).

5. Parallels Between the Life of Joseph and Jesus Christ

This chapter has focused on the life of Joseph, son of Jacob. We have followed his life from Canaan to Egypt. In each instances of his life his actions have been exemplary culminating in the forgiveness of his brothers. His has truly been a life worthy of emulation. As we contrast his life with the life of Jesus Christ we see many similarities.

Old Testament Institute Student Manual notes nine similarities:

1. “Joseph was the favored son of his father; so was Jesus (Gen. 37:3; Matt. 3:17).
2. “Joseph was rejected by his brothers, the Israelites, as was Jesus (Gen. 37:4; John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3; 1 Ne. 19:13-14).
3. “Joseph was sold by his brothers into the hands of the Gentiles, just as Jesus was (Gen. 37:25-27; Matt. 20:19).
4. “Judah, the head of the tribe of Judah, proposed the sale of Joseph. Certain leaders of the Jews in Jesus day turned Jesus over to the Romans. Judas (the Greek spelling of Judah) was the one who actually sold Jesus (Gen. 37:26; Matt. 27:3).
5. “Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age. Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave his age (Gen. 37:28; Matt. 27:3; Exodus 21:32; Leviticus 27:5).
6. “In their very attempt to destroy Joseph, his brothers actually set up the conditions that would bring about their eventual temporal salvation—that is, Joseph, by virtue of being sold, would become their deliverer. Jesus, by his being given into the hands of the Gentiles, was crucified and completed the atoning sacrifice, becoming the Deliverer for all mankind.
7. “Joseph began his mission of preparing salvation for Israel an age thirty, just as Jesus began his ministry of preparing salvation for the world at age thirty (Gen. 41:46; Luke 3:23).
8. “When Joseph was finally raised to his exalted position in Egypt, all bowed the knee to him. All will eventually bow the knee to Jesus (Gen. 41:43; D&C 88:104).
9. “Joseph provided bread for Israel and saved them from death, all without cost. Jesus, the Bread of Life, did the same for all men (Gen. 42:35; John 6:48-57; 2 Nephi 9:50)”.

(Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 97)

6. Conclusion

In spite of the challenges Joseph encountered in his life, including being sold by his brothers, being a slave in a strange land, being seduced by his Overseer's wife, being put in prison and then eventually become second only to the Pharaoh, he remained faithful to his covenants with his God. He will reflectively testify to his brothers that all that had occurred in his life had been overseen by his God. He had enjoyed his guidance and protection so that he might fulfill the mission God had sent him to perform, mainly "to preserve you [his family] a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Gen. 45:7).

Today, the Lord will also bless our lives if we will seek to know his will and then follow his direction. The Lord wants to be a part of our lives if we will only ask for his guidance. A willingness to humble ourselves and through prayer to speak the feelings of our hearts with faith will bring great comfort and direction. Joseph never gave up and sought, with all of his challenges, to do his best and trusted that God would not forsake him. God kept His promise to Joseph. God will keep His promise to us.