

## **STUDY NUMBER SIX - Genesis 43:1-34**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In a small neighborhood newspaper in Phoenix, Arizona, last summer Mrs. Lawrence C. Wolken of Alie found a piece she believes will be appreciated by all builders everywhere, so she sent it to me. The Arizona paper credited a publication of the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Trades Industry with origin of the piece. Here goes:

"And the Lord said unto Noah: 'Where is the ark I commanded thee to build?' And Noah said unto the Lord: 'Verily, I have had three carpenters off ill. The gopher-wood supplier has let me down--yea, even though the order has been in for nigh upon 12 months.'

"And God said unto Noah: I want that ark finished even after seven days and seven nights.' And Noah said, 'It will be so.' And it was not so. And the Lord said unto Noah, 'What seemeth to be the trouble this time?'

"And Noah said unto the Lord: 'Mine subcontractor hath gone bankrupt. The pitch which Thou commanded me to put on the outside of the ark hath not arrived. The plumber hath gone on strike. Shem, my son who helpeth me on the ark side of the business, hath formed a pop group with his brothers Ham and Japeth. Lord, I am undone.'

"And the Lord grew angry and said: 'What about the animals, the male and female of every sort that I ordered to come unto thee to keep their seed alive upon the face of the earth?' And Noah said, 'They have been delivered to the wrong address but should arriveth on Friday.'

"How about the unicorns and the fowls of the air by sevens?"

"And Noah wrung his hands and wept, saying: 'Lord, unicorns are a discontinued line, they can't be had for love or money. And fowls of the air are sold only in half-dozens. Lord, Lord, Thou knowest how it is.'

"And the Lord in his wisdom said, 'Noah, my son, I knowest. Why else doth thee think I have caused a flood to descend upon the earth?'" As the scene of today's episode unfolds, Jacob is fighting God's eternal purpose. He's got his heels dug in and his jaw set, and he is just not going to budge. For the blessings of the land of Egypt to become the possession of Jacob and his family, it is going to be necessary for him to turn loose of Benjamin. And thus far he has not been willing to do that.

God had predicted in Genesis 15 at the institution of the Abrahamic Covenant that the children of Israel would end up in the land of Egypt. We have watched God work out through a man's life the fulfillment of these promises. Joseph, who was hated by his brothers, was sold into the land of Egypt as a slave. God providentially protected him and allowed him to serve in the house of Potiphar, and in his service to reflect the fact that the Lord was with him. And Potiphar gave to him all of the responsibility of the house, with the exception of the food service.

We saw Joseph tested with temptation and how he held on to the principles of high moral conduct in the time that it would have been easy to have yielded to the passions of his lower nature.

We watched him being unjustly treated in being put into prison because of a misunderstanding, and how in that situation he even had a positive attitude and was faithful to serve the Lord even when others would have probably been very bitter and deeply desirous of petitioning the authorities because of the injustice.

Even at the point that it seemed like he was going to be delivered from prison through the intervention of the king's cupbearer, he had to remain two more years. And then in God's own time and way, through the interpretation of the king's dreams, Joseph was instantaneously elevated to second in command in the country. Through this experience he has led the nation into prosperity because the dreams predicted that there would be seven good years and then these would be followed by seven years of famine.

We have seen Joseph find a good wife, and he now has two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim.

The famine during the seven years has created economic distress in a number of the surrounding countries. Thus Joseph's family in Canaan has been affected by this, and Jacob has sent the boys, ten of them, down to try to get some grain in order that they might continue to live. When the boys arrive, Joseph treated them harshly and kept Simeon, with the promise that if they returned with Benjamin, the younger brother, then they could have Simeon back and also trade freely in the land.

The boys return to their father Jacob with this message, and he refused to comply with their wishes by saying, "Everything is against me! My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

Jacob is a lot like the PRODIGAL SON in:

Luke 15: beginning at v. 14

Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

God has a way of increasing the pressure as we resist His sovereign purpose.

As today's story unfolds, we find that the grain that they have purchased has now been used up, and their family is facing another crisis.

v. 1 Now the famine was still severe in the land.

This is SOVEREIGN STRESS SEEKING SUBMISSION FROM HIS SERVANT.

How kind God is to use the forces of nature to whip us into line.

In thinking back on Luke 15 and the Parable of the Prodigal Son, at the time that his finances began to dwindle, he also faces the fact that the land in which he is living is experiencing economic distress. And the famine was great enough to drive him to an even greater need than he would have experienced under other conditions.

Eccles. 3:1

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.

It can get pretty tough and pretty lonely when you're fighting God's sovereign purpose for your life.

v. 2 So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

Jacob has already made it clear back in the previous chapter in verse 38 that he has no intentions of complying with the regulations stipulated by the ruler of Egypt. "But Jacob said, 'My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.'"

We have got to remember that this is the guy who wrestles all night with the angel back in Genesis 32 at Peniel the night before he is to meet Esau.

Now Jacob commands his sons to "Go back and buy us a little food," with no thought of complying with the request of Joseph in sending Benjamin along with them.

Jacob is just not willing to face the fact that there will be no provision until he is willing to surrender.

How oftentimes we are oblivious to the requirements and how easy it is to overlook the disobediences in our lives and wonder why God is not pouring out his provisions upon us.

John Sterner in his book *Growing Through Mid-Life Crises* says,

As I get into middle age, I realize that I have not kept all of Jesus' requirements, or even any completely. I remember that little old lady in a prayer meeting singing, "I surrender some," because she wanted to be honest with God. At times, my honest song would be, "I don't surrender a thing tonight, and I haven't for a long time; but keep hanging in there, God, and I just might."

v. 3 But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'

Judah, the fourth-born son of Leah, now takes center stage and confronts his father with what they had faced on their prior journey to Egypt.

Judah now takes the place of Reuben in appealing to his father about the circumstances they had faced on their prior visit to Egypt. This is not a lack of submission on the part of Judah but simply a solemn reminder to his father that it would be of no use for them to go and appeal for more grain until they were obedient to his command to bring Benjamin with them.

You have to deal with these things. You can't just leave them hanging fire.

v. 4 If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you.

Time now has caused Jacob to recognize the seriousness of the condition. And so Judah tells his father, "If you'll change your mind and send Benjamin with us, then we will respect your wishes and be obedient to your command and go down and buy food for you."

v. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'"

Jacob, let us have your Benjamin, and then we'll go.

Judah is quite firm now and makes it quite clear to his father that it would be a needless effort put forth and a meaningless journey if they went down there without Benjamin. And he repeats the words of Joseph: "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you."

How oftentimes does the Lord seek to have us surrender ourselves totally and

completely to Him. Perhaps he is saying, "Bring your Benjamin," and in the bringing of your Benjamin you are surrendering everything to me. It is in that submission and surrender that God is going to bless and make provision.

### Genesis 22:1-3

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

Oh what joys and blessings we miss by our stubborn, selfish resistance. Jacob, there's no way out of this except for you to surrender and turn Benjamin over to me. You and your family are going to starve to death here in the land of Canaan, when my bountiful provision waited for you 250 miles away in the land of Egypt.

### Malachi 3:10

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

v. 6 Israel asked, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?"

Now Jacob in his resistance makes the problem personal and blames the boys for treating him so badly by the fact that they told Joseph that they still had another brother.

Don't blame the boys, Jacob, it is God who is at work in these circumstances.

How quick we are in our lives to fog the issue with a question that places blame for our problems on someone else.

v. 7 They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?' he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?' We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?"

It has been a dialogue between Judah and Jacob to this point, but now Jacob's question in verse 6 blaming them for all the trouble he is experiencing at this moment, they all got involved and told him quite clearly how the cow eats the cabbage.

The man asked us closely about ourselves and our family. He asked us if our father was still living. He asked us if we had another brother. We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?

Now the conversation has switched just from Judah to the rest of the brothers involved in the situation, and they all chime in that the man had questioned them about their relatives. He had asked them particularly about their father and whether or not they had another brother. The boys, in all their honesty, say, "We simply answered his questions." Then they ask a question that is very difficult for Jacob to answer. Their question is: "How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here'?"

v. 8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.

Now Judah is very adamant at this point, and he makes his father realize that his affection for one of the boys is jeopardizing the other ten who are involved, as well as their own families.

Judah can sense that his father has no more arguments, and that his resistance is beginning to weaken. I would imagine that some of the previous statements were made with a great deal of emotion and were probably quite loud. Now, as things are beginning to settle down, Judah probably said to him very softly and very lovingly,

"Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die."

Jacob the only way to win is to surrender. So let Benjamin go with us.

v. 9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.

Judah doesn't go quite as far as Reuben does in this situation but he is willing to serve as the intercessor. He is willing to be responsible for Benjamin, and he is willing to bear the blame of any ill-fated happenings to him on the journey.

Dad, if you are worried about Benjamin, let me tell you that I will guarantee his safety. And if anything happens to him, you can hold me personally responsible. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.

v. 10 As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."

Jacob, your indecision and resistance is causing us undue delay. We are lagging behind because of your unwillingness to cooperate with the demands of the leader in Egypt. We could by now have returned twice if you had been willing to have cooperated with us earlier.

We are nearly starving because of your unwillingness to submit.

The time is urgent. Let's get on with the program and quit sitting on our hands, fearful of what might happen.

The big question that comes to each of us at this point is: How much are we missing by our resistance?



*(Ponder This by Leonard Andrews)*

Who hasn't been afraid  
of some of the decisions  
they have to make?

It is usually  
much worse  
not to make them.

*(Growing Through Mid-Life Crises by John Sterner)*

Oh, life is a toil, and love is a trial;  
Beauty will fade and riches will flee.  
Pleasures, they dwindle, and prices, they double;  
And nothing is as I would wish it to be.  
--Anonymous Folk Song

The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged  
prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent  
campaigning weather (for the devil).  
--C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*

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

Louis Blanc, a boastful and blatant scoffer remarked: "When I was a baby I rebelled against my mother; when I was a young boy I rebelled against my teachers; when I was a teenager, I rebelled against my father; when I reached mature years I rebelled against the government; when I die, if there is a heaven and a God, I will rebel against Him!"

How oftentimes children are involved in some of the major turning points in our lives. Jacob, the choice is yours.

### Genesis 32:24ff

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Jacob, as soon as you let go of Benjamin, the Lord will bless you.

v. 11 Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift-- a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds.

Oh what glorious words of surrender: "Then their father Israel said to them, 'If it must be'..."

You can almost hear the strains of the invitation hymn:

Just as I am, tho' tossed about,  
With many a conflict, many a doubt.  
Fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea, all I need in Thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,  
Because Thy promise I believe.  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

### Proverbs 24:6

For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.

A wise man will yield to reason, be it from a son, a servant, a wife, or any other person.

How much the human soul desires independence. We always wish to play our own way, to protect our ego, by doing something for others so that a favor might be granted to us.

Lewis B. Smedes in his book *How Can It Be All Right When It's All Wrong* says,

So--we are down to the bottom line. We make our beds in hell whenever human hands stop patting us on the head the way mother used to do, or when we realize, at last, that all the hands in the world cannot stroke us enough to make us sure it is all right. We flop into hell's bed when human hands fail us, one way or the other.  
p.113

If no human hand ever again pounded my shoulder to tell me I was one of the gang, I could survive.

If no human hand ever grabbed mine to tell me I had a friend, I could survive.  
(cont.)

If no hand ever deftly brushed my lips to tell me I was cherished, I could survive.

If no loving hand rested on my forehead when I died, I could survive.

If no churchly hand were stretched over my dead body to give me a parting benediction, I could survive.

I can survive the minor hell of having no human hand to help me because I am held in hell by the hand of God. What I felt, then, was not sweetness so much as strength. There is a courage that comes from being held by God in hell, a courage to be what you are, knowing that what you are is a person who can never be anywhere without being with a God who holds you up. Yes, what I felt was more like courage than like piety.

p.116

Jacob has made a decision to surrender, to cooperate with God's eternal purpose. This is the pivotal point in the whole story. Everything else turns on this decision.

This is just like the old Jacob, though. When he was ready to meet Esau, he sent a very large gift on ahead of him to placate Esau before they met. Now, once again, he gets a gift ready for the ruler of the land before the boys depart.

v. 12 Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake.

Jacob wants to be sure that he covers all the bases, and so he not only sends a gift, but he tells the boys to take double the amount of silver this time with them so they can give back the silver that was in their first allotment, and then also have silver left over to buy another allotment for their families.

Jacob cannot understand why the money was returned, and so he wants to be safe in this critical situation as well as being generous.

v. 13 Take your brother also and go back to the man at once.

These are the hardest words that Jacob has ever spoken in his life. He has waited until last to say it.

Take a gift, take the money, and then take your brother.

Here we have the words of wisdom from the lips of Jacob. He has been appealed to by his sons about the situation in Egypt, and now he is rejecting his own wisdom and he is cooperating with God's plan in fulfilling his ultimate purpose when he is telling them to take Benjamin and go back to the man at once.

This is a very traumatic and difficult time for Jacob. This is the first time he has truly been alone. His wife Rachel is dead, and now all ten of his sons are preparing to leave him at one time. He has always had either Joseph or Benjamin to stay with him. Now they are all leaving. Jacob's trust is going to be cast upon God in a new way in these circumstances.

Jacob is truly facing the EMPTY-NEST SYNDROME for the first time. There are a lot of women and grandchildren around but none of his own sons are with him now.

This experience causes us to remember Jacob's first experience being alone the first night on the road when he left his family:

#### Genesis 28:15

The Lord spoke to him, "I am with you, and will watch over you wherever you go; and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When you come right down to it, this is the ultimate destiny of all of us. We will experience our necessary losses. We will be stripped of all of our supports and we'll be standing alone before the Lord.

I was jogging the other morning at the track, and a friend of mine was jogging with three other fellows. A little bit later I saw my friend sitting alone on the bleachers resting. When I came by, I said, "It looks like all your friends have left you, and now it's just you and the Lord." Yes, that's the way it is, and when it gets down to that, it's either His will or your will. Jacob has decided to follow the path of blessing. He is going to turn it over to the Lord, and He is going to release his Benjamin.

#### Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear; for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

v. 14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

Jacob's prayer and desire for blessing upon them is that God Almighty, that is, God the all-powerful one, the one who makes and keeps covenants, the one who doesn't need any help, the one who nourishes, sustains, and protects, grant you compassion

in the sight of the man. And as a result of that compassion, he may release to you Simeon and Benjamin.

All he has left is God Almighty, and that is all he is going to need. "For if God be for us, who can be against us?"

And then Jacob speaks those famous words of resignation, "As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

Since children are a gift from God, God the giver has a right at any time to take back that which He has given, because after all it belongs to Him.

Jacob is saying with Esther in Esther 4:16

"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

I have no alternative, I must go. The responsibility for me is to represent the Jewish people.

I commit this event unreservedly to God to do with as He pleases. And the words of Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"Peter, do you love me more than these?"

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Jacob has turned in his guns, and he's getting ready for a big one.

Whenever we conform to His pattern and to His will, we will be at peace. What a relief this must be for Jacob in this crisis moment when the decision which he is

about to make will affect the future of his family and the length of their lives, to be willing to hear the wisdom of his sons and to submit himself to the obvious will of God in allowing Benjamin to go with them back to Egypt.

### Job 42:10

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.

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

So we dare not neglect intercession, for it is the surest way to God's blessings on others and our own liberation. Psychologists agree that the best way to get tied up in a knotty bondage is to be continually thinking about oneself. Even prayer must be rescued from making circles around "self," or it soon becomes sterile.

What happened when Job prayed for his friends? God set him free from his physical affliction, from his emotional anguish, and from his mental anxiety. It was prayer that brought the miracle, the emancipation, the deliverance in Job's life, and it is prayer that can bring release in yours also.

v. 15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.

Knowing that time is of an essence because the families are in such great need in Canaan because of Jacob's delay, the men took the gifts, double the money, and Benjamin, and they hurried the 250-mile trip down to Egypt. And they present themselves to Joseph.

With all of the things which Jacob had commanded for them to do, they left as a group of ten men to make their second journey down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.

v. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon."

Evidently, the ten men arrived at the place of grain distribution sometime early in the morning. They are a lot like us. You travel late to get there early.

When Joseph saw that they had been faithful in bringing Benjamin with them, he then gives a command to the house steward and tells him to get everything ready because he is planning on having lunch with them.

There are several things that Joseph still needs to do before he reveals himself to his brothers.

v. 17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house.

How do you feel when some guy says, "Come along with me"?

The men had it in their minds that they would just have an official meeting with the ruler and then find that he releases Simeon unto them and they would be able to return to the land with the much-desired grain.

The house steward, in getting everything ready, takes the ten men to Joseph's house.

v. 18 Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys."

The men are scared to death by this strange turn of events. Their own fear misinterprets the kindness of Joseph in this situation. And as a result, they are unable to enjoy the privilege of dining with the ruler of the land.

Because of their past guilt, they misinterpret this particular happening and say to themselves that it's because of the money that was returned in their sacks the first time, and it's because of this that they are being brought in. And now they feel that "the ruler wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our



donkeys."

v. 19 So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house.

They realized that their own lives depended upon a strict accounting. Nothing could save them except the truth. No longer could they live a lie.

Before they are even going to enter the house, they are going to get some things straight with the steward.

v. 20 "Please, sir," they said, "we came down here the first time to buy food.

They stop him right at the door and make a request. They say, "Please, sir. We want you to know that we came down here the first time to buy food."

v. 21 But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver--the exact weight--in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us.

They describe in meticulous detail the circumstances of their journey back to Canaan, and that when they had come to the KOA to spend the night, they found the money. Now, to show their honesty, they are bringing the money back in hand, realizing that it was evidently a mistake.

v. 22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

The men say, "We have also brought additional silver with us so that we can buy food." Then they say, "We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

v. 23 "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

The steward evidently reflects the faith of the ruler Joseph. He tells them to relax and not be afraid. He attributes the fact that the God of their father had given them treasure in their sacks.

Although Joseph was the one responsible for the command to return the money, yet the command was prompted by the God of their fathers. What a precious thought it is that the Lord allows us to be stewards of those things which he grants us, and that the provision made to those by the generosity of the stewards can be attributed as a provision from the Lord's hand.

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

In the late 1920s a man gave several thousand dollars to help build a church. Then came the crash. He lost all he had. Someone lamented, "If only you had kept the money you gave to start the church, you would have enough to set yourself up in business again." He answered softly, "Sir, I would have lost that too in the crash. As it is, it's the only money I have really saved. It's now in the bank of heaven accumulating interest till eternity. Hundreds have come to know Christ through the church that the money built!"

In a dream a couple saw themselves nearing the end of life's journey. They were lugging a lot of baggage, money, stocks, bonds, finery, jewels, and furs. Just outside the gate of heaven was a junk pile. Throw all your things in that heap," an angel ordered. Slowly, almost reluctantly, they parted with their earthly treasures, so dear on earth, but worthless up above.

Then another couple approached, carrying very little baggage. Suddenly the gates swung outward as songs of praise rang within. A host of people whom they had never met greeted them inside the gate. The angel explained that these people had been won to Christ through the money this couple had given to missions. What joy overwhelmed this couple as they met this treasure they had laid up in heaven.

Simeon has been in jail a little less than two years, and the steward brings Simeon out to them.

How sensitive he is about their fears and apprehensions; and so first he tells them to relax about the money, and then he brings Simeon to them so that they can see that the ruler of the land is just and will deal with them in righteousness.

It is the desire of the steward to help them realize that they are being ministered unto by people who love them.

The house steward says, "I received your silver." I had it: your payment in full. You cannot be called to account for it. Give yourselves no uneasiness on that particular score.

v. 24 The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys.

The house steward realizes that the men also have some present personal needs besides the fears that were plaguing them at the moment. They needed to get washed up in order to enjoy a meal with Joseph. So he provides water for them to wash their feet, and then the animals that have made the journey are in real need of food and attention. So he provides food for them.

The men probably practically ran the wheels off the donkeys getting them down there because they were in such a hurry to get the provision and get back to their starving families.

*(Ponder This by Leonard Andrews)*

Love,  
what are you  
to be called?

You are  
awareness  
and appreciation.

How graciously the steward serves, anticipating the men's needs and caring for them so unselfishly.

He goes about his work so professionally as he prepares the meal and the men for Joseph's arrival.

v. 25 They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

Now that all their fears have been put aside, they are free to prepare the gifts they have brought for Joseph, looking forward to eating with him at noon. Now that they have been taken care of, they spend the rest of the morning preparing the special present that they brought from Canaan for Joseph's coming at lunchtime. It is sort of like the preparation for a surprise birthday party. They are getting all the gifts in readiness so that the ruler will look upon them in a favorable way.

I am sure Benjamin is walking around bug-eyed. This bronco buster from Canaan has never seen this kind of action. He has never been away from home before. You can almost hear him say, "Gollleeee! Look at that!"

v. 26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground.

Once again, Joseph sees the divine fulfillment of the dreams which he had. For in the gift is the bowing of Jacob and the rest of the family, as well as the bowing of the eleven sons to him.

What a dramatic, emotional moment. This is the first time in 22 years that the 12 sons have been together.

v. 27 He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?"

Joseph, in his unselfish compassion and concern, asks them first about their own welfare; and then he turns and asks them about their father, and then he asks, "Is he still alive?"

v. 28 They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed low to pay him honor.

Here again, we have the fulfillment of the dreams: "They bowed low to pay him honor."

They are being so careful to show real respect for Joseph because they are coming with a request that involves their own lives and the lives of their wives and children.

v. 29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

As Joseph sees Benjamin, there is a flood of memories that comes into his mind, because he can see a likeness to his mother Rachel. Oh, how well does he remember the day in his youth when his mother died when Benjamin was born.

He does not even wait for them to answer his question. He just centers his attention upon Benjamin. And in a real, gracious, and gentle spirit, with words filled with kindness, he says, "God be gracious to you, my son."

What discipline and restraint Joseph must exercise in these circumstances. How much now he wants to reveal himself to his brothers as to who he really is but there is still one more test that they must endure.

v. 30 Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.

The love and emotion in his heart and the fact that he now had seen Benjamin, he is deeply stirred--even as Jesus saw Mary crying, he too wept--so Joseph had to go find a place to cry awhile before he can continue with the ceremonies at hand. Joseph weeps because he finds that further trial of his brothers is going to be extremely difficult.

### Psalm 126:5, 6

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy,  
he who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow,  
will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves  
with him.

*(Has Life Given You a Lemon...Make Lemonade by Robert D. Foster)*

However, the lack of "tears" in the heart and eyes of most men could be a signpost of a cold heart, unbroken spirit and unrepenting will.

What God's Word has put together . . . don't try to tear asunder. We need sowing and reaping, weeping and shouting; passion and production, ardor and advance.

When a man weeps, we say that he is broken down. True tears are the signs of brokenness. No more hardness or resistance . . . staggered by a sensitivity of sin, this is the heart of Godly religion.

How easily we become hard, proud, "intellectually-balanced" and soul-dry.

v. 31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, "Serve the food."

Joseph washes up and hopes to cover the redness of his eyes. As he comes out to see his brothers again, controlled by an inner self-discipline to wait God's time in all that must be done, he tells them to serve the meal.

v. 32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.

There are three different groups who are eating. Joseph is by himself, and the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians by themselves. It goes on to say that they could not eat together. I guess the Arab-Jewish conflict goes clear back to the

time of Joseph. I don't feel that this was a social problem of superior and inferior, but merely a part of Egyptian tradition.

v. 33 The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment.

#### Genesis 42:1

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

You can imagine what it would be like to be invited to dinner at the White House and to find the whole family seated according to age-- The oldest on one end of the table and the youngest on the other.

The brothers could not believe that Joseph had seated each of them according to age at the table.

You can just see them as they started to seat themselves and they discovered an order in the seating:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad,  
Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin

v. 34 When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

The divine discipline is taking place in the lives of the brothers. It is a testing for the revelation and development of their character.

Benjamin is given five times as much to see if jealousy against Benjamin was just like it was before his time when Joseph received the hatred of his brothers because of his favored position with his father.

See if you can just get the picture in your mind. As they begin serving the meal, the menu called for steak, salad, baked potatoes, corn on the cob, homemade rolls, iced tea to drink, and deep-dish apple pie a la mode for dessert. For effect, they probably served the men according to their ages, as well, starting with Reuben and moving all the way down the line to Zebulun. Then there comes a time of delay, and pretty soon a huge tray comes and the waiters stand formally before Benjamin's place. Five steaks, five salads, five baked potatoes, five corn on the cob, five homemade rolls, five glasses of iced tea, and five deep-dish apple pie a la modes for dessert.

The men seem to realize the need of standing together for the sake of each other. As far as Benjamin is concerned, he will be put in a situation in the next study where he will be rendered susceptible to a charge of theft. This will place all of the men in the same situation as when they had sold Joseph into Egypt.

Nobody opens his mouth saying, "Just like home!" They just all eat very quietly and with respect.

Jesus does a similar thing with Judas in John 13:26,27

Jesus, therefore, answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when he had dipped the morsel, he took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

I can remember well one time traveling from Seattle to Dallas with Lamar Muse on one of the Muse Air chartered aircraft. Because I was sitting with Lamar, I got five packages of peanuts, ten Tabs, two lunches, and a partridge in a pear tree.

Here Joseph gives Benjamin preferential treatment in anticipation of a response from the brothers that will give him some indication of their relationship to one another.

It is altogether fitting that we conclude our study at this point and leave the men at the table. It's going to take Benjamin until next time to finish all this food, so we can go on with the rest of the story.



## CONCLUSION:

This chapter can be titled "The Second Visit to Egypt."

It is on this second visit to Egypt that the brothers are going to recognize the one whom they sold into slavery, their own brother. So it is in Christ's second coming to set up His kingdom, those who did not recognize Him the first time, those who rejected and crucified Him are going to look upon Him whom they have pierced and realize the fact that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God.

There are a number of lessons that we can gain from this study:

LESSON #1: God sometimes kindly uses natural circumstances to get us to be responsive to His will.

LESSON #2: It is the place of wisdom to hear the appeals of others and then to be receptive to a change of heart on the basis of the information received.

The older we get, the harder this is.

Many of our statements are begun with:

"We've always..."

or

"Don't confuse me with the facts."

LESSON #3: It is a pattern of human nature to want to cover our fears and guilt with gifts.

LESSON #4: Fear misinterprets kindness.

LESSON #5: We are oftentimes tested when we are unconscious of it being so.

LESSON #6: Joseph's kindness and faith in God has affected other members of the household.

LESSON #7: Peace comes when we surrender our Benjamin, and we resign ourselves to the sovereign will of God. "If I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

I am sure you are probably saying at this time, I can't do this. I can't do that. I can't give up. What you really need to do is to be honest with yourself and say, I won't. Once you deal with that rebellious, resistant attitude and surrender to the Father's will, you then will begin to witness the joy of one who can do exceeding abundant above all that we can ask or think.

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,  
Nor ever murmur nor repine,  
Content whatever lot I see,  
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

He leadeth me, He leadeth me,  
By His own hand He leadeth me.  
His faithful follower I would be,  
For by His hand He leadeth me.