

# Genesis 41, 42

## Helps for Bible Study on the Book of Genesis

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3) Any sense in which the famine can be said to have been for the good also of the heathen nations that felt its sting. At this time? In their generations? (Consider them once as “Gentiles.”)

c. Is it essential to maintain that not things in themselves but God’s purpose with all things determines whether they are good (saving) or bad (destroying) for men?

### II. The Meeting

#### A. Some details.

1. About how much time has elapsed since the brothers sold Joseph? (cf. Gen. 37:2; 41:46; 41:29, 30; 45:11)

2. What explains the absence of Benjamin? (vs. 4)

a. Does Jacob’s great concern for Benjamin’s welfare stem from a greater love for him than for the other ten boys? (cf. Gen 42:38; 44:20, 27-31)

b. If Jacob loves Benjamin more than the other ten sons, is this due to Jacob’s preference for Rachel above Leah? (note the absolute “my wife” in Gen. 44:27)

c. Is the inevitable preference of a father for the children of one wife over the children of the other wife (wives) and the resulting friction in the family a judgment of God upon the sin of bigamy and polygamy?

d. Does it denote a radical, spiritual change in the sons of Leah and the concubines that, in distinction from their attitude over against Joseph, once, they are not irritated by Jacob’s greater love for Benjamin?

3. Note the fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams concerning his brothers’ subjection to him. (cf. Gen. 37)

a. They literally bow to him not once but several times.

b. Even after they know him to be Joseph, they willingly prostrate themselves before him, acknowledging their servitude. (cf. Gen. 51:18)

#### B. The brothers.

1. What evidence is there both in chapter 42 and in subsequent chapters that the brothers have changed spiritually?

##### Questions:

1. Was Pharaoh converted to the true God by this experience, or does he merely refer to God as one of the many gods? See vs. 38, 39.

2. Did Joseph adopt the religious practices of Egypt, or did he remain a true stranger in the land?

3. How could it be right for him to marry a heathen wife?

4. What significance does this have for us that God so plainly carries out His counsel in Joseph’s life?

a. Does their readiness in vs. 21 to associate their present affliction with their sin against Joseph indicate that, already before this time, their consciences troubled them in the matter of

Joseph? Or, is their reference to Joseph in vs. 13, “one is not,” a deliberate lie, indicating that they, at this point, continue impenitent?

b. What does their immediate ascription of their troubles to God (vs. 28) signify?

c. Vs. 21 fills in a detail that chapter 37 omits—Joseph’s intense and pitiable anguish when his life was hanging in the balance and while he was bartered. It serves to heighten our impression of the cold-bloodedness of the brothers at that time and to point up the remarkable conformity of Joseph to Jesus Christ at this time when he could but does not avenge himself.

2. Does Reuben’s resume (vs. 22) of his speech in Gen. 37:21, 22 accurately describe Reuben’s motives at the time of the selling of Joseph?

a. Does not Reuben imply now that he had been concerned simply about Joseph and the sin of murdering him?

b. But does not Gen. 37, especially, vs. 30 indicate selfishness on Reuben’s part, the ulterior motive of fearing, as the first born, to give account to Jacob?

c. Or, must we read Gen. 37 in the light of Gen 42:22?

3. Some speculate that Joseph deliberately selected Simeon to remain in prison since Simeon had been the ringleader in the persecution of Joseph. This would naturally intensify in the brothers the conviction that God was chastising them for their sin against Joseph.

C. Joseph’s dealings.

1. Why does Joseph so severely afflict his brothers?

a. What instances of this affliction can you cite in this chapter? In chapters 43 and 44?

b. What evidence is there in the chapter that Joseph, amazingly and by the grace of God, is not motivated by desire for revenge?

c. Can Joseph, by this method, be finding out something concerning the brothers? Is he, possibly, playing the pedagogue? If so, what does he teach?

2. Through Joseph, what does the Lord do to the brothers?

(It is worthwhile to put yourself in the brothers’ shoes. Suppose yourself to have a clamoring conscience to begin with—the sin of selling Joseph had not yet been thoroughly confessed. Next, threatened with death by starvation, both personally and your family, you make a long, arduous trip to Egypt where the “sultan” not only hesitates to supply the all-important food-stuffs but accuses you of spying, a crime that means quick execution. Then, three days in prison to contemplate past sins, an uncertain future, and the painful prospect of taking Benjamin away from Jacob. The whole of the episode, extended over a year or more, was sore chastisement for the brothers by God, Who had heard Joseph’s wails and marked the deafness of the brothers.)

3. Why does Joseph insist on his brothers bringing Benjamin to Egypt?

4. Why was it a cause of fear that the purchase-money was found in the brothers’ sacks? (cf. vs. 28 and vs. 35) Was it Joseph’s intention to frighten them with this “refund?”

5. Apart now from Joseph’s intention, God continues to make Jacob’s way very hard also (Gen. 42:29-38).

a. Does Jacob’s remark in vs. 36, ascribing responsibility to the brothers for Joseph’s “death,” imply suspicion on Jacob’s part that the brothers had hand in Joseph’s death?

b. What point was Reuben attempting to make in vs. 37? Certainly he did not suppose that the murder of his brother would enable Jacob to bear more easily the possible death or imprisonment of Benjamin.

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