

## Genesis 42 – The Testing Begins

### INTRO:

Helps to know what is happening – spans several chapters

- Joseph is testing his brothers
- Joseph is leading them to place of repentance
- God using Joseph to restore his family (seed)

Family is broken:

- grieving father – guilty brothers
- for years and years
- Judah left – God began work in him

Chapter 42 begins with all 10 brothers back with Jacob

### I. Joseph's Brothers Are Brought Before Him (v.1-9a)

#### A. Jacob's sons go to Egypt to buy grain (1-5)

1. Jacob shows disdain for his sons inaction (1)
  - a. "why do you look at one another?"
  - b. family is without food – they are doing nothing
  - c. Jacob is frustrated – speaks with disdain to them
2. Jacob tells his sons to go to Egypt and buy food (2)
  - a. Everyone probably knew there was grain in Egypt
  - b. Why wouldn't the brothers want to go?
  - c. Will see hidden guilt bubble to surface in this chapter
3. Jacob sends all his sons except Benjamin (3-4)
  - a. Notice: text calls them "Joseph's brothers"
  - b. Jacob will not send Benjamin – He fears harm to him
    - i. Benjamin is now the favorite
    - ii. Benjamin is in the place Joseph once occupied
    - iii. Jacob clearly cares more about his welfare than the others
4. Many people stream into Egypt to buy food (5)
  - a. No mention of the journey
  - b. No mention of what they did to Joseph being discussed all these years
  - c. They joined a large stream of people going to Egypt to buy food
  - d. Language: This is how the sons of Israel came – fulfillment coming
    - i. God's providence at work

#### B. Jacob's sons bow before Joseph (6-7a)

1. Joseph was governor of Egypt
  - a. If they would buy grain – they would have to come through him
2. Joseph's brothers unknowingly bow before him
  - a. And here the first dream of Joseph is fulfilled
  - b. Although they don't recognize him – they bow before him
3. Joseph recognizes his brothers

#### C. Joseph remembers His Dreams (7b-9a)

1. Joseph questions his brothers (7b)

NOTE: Joseph is not plotting revenge or making them suffer for their act. 4x in this narrative, Joseph will weep. Joseph engages in an elaborate test to see if his brothers were still the same hard-hearted men he knew. He will test them to see if they are treating his brother Benjamin just as they treated him. He will engage their conscience and bring their guilt and repentance to the surface.

- a. Joseph asks about their origins
- 2. Joseph remembers his dreams of them bowing (8-9a)
  - a. The brothers did not recognize Joseph?
    - i. He was 17 the last time they saw him. Now he is 37.
    - ii. He is fully shaven, dressed as Egyptian royalty
    - iii. He is in a place of power and authority
  - b. Joseph remembered his dreams
    - i. He remembers what God told him would come to pass
    - ii. He realizes this is the fulfillment and for what purpose
    - iii. He is in a position to either destroy them or save them
    - iv. He has the wisdom to know what to do
- II. Joseph Tests His Brothers (9b-20)
  - A. Joseph Interrogates His Brothers (9b-13)
    - 1. Joseph accuses them of being spies (9b)
      - a. The nakedness of the land = the defenselessness of the land because of the famine
      - b. He accuses them of planning a rebellion or an attack upon Egypt
    - 2. The brothers claim to be an honest family (10-11)
      - a. They tell him they have come to buy food
      - b. They tell him they are sons of one man
      - c. They tell him they are honest men
        - i. honest? – really? With Jacob? With Joseph?
    - 3. Joseph accuses them again (12)
    - 4. The brothers tell Joseph about their family (13)
      - a. They repeat their denial and assertion of their family roots
      - b. They offer unsolicited information about their other brothers
        - i. The youngest is with their father (Joseph realizes Benjamin is alive)
        - ii. One is no more (Joseph realizes they think he is dead – or claim that he is dead)
  - B. Joseph demands the brothers be tested (14-17)
    - 1. Joseph will test them with their brother (14-15)
      - a. Joseph binds them with an oath by Pharaoh's life
      - b. They will not leave unless the younger brother comes
        - i. Why does Joseph want Benjamin to come to Egypt?
    - 2. One brother will return to retrieve the youngest brother (16)
    - 3. The brothers are put in jail for 3 days (17)
      - a. Joseph shows that he is dead serious
      - b. Just as they threw him in the pit – he threw them in the prison
      - c. These three days give them time to reflect on their situation
  - C. Joseph changes the terms of the test (18-20)  
(Just as the brothers planned to kill him and changed their plan to sell him)
    - 1. One brother will remain and the others will go back (18-19)

- a. He introduces the new plan by saying that fulfilling it will allow them to live
    - b. Only one brother returning couldn't carry enough food for the family
    - c. The reason he says he changes the plan is because he fears God
      - i. The unknown Egyptian ruler introduces the idea of fearing God to Israel's sons
      - ii. Testing to see what their response will be
      - iii. What a contrast: There is no evidence yet that the brothers fear God (except maybe Judah)
      - iv. Maybe this got them to thinking about God and their lives before Him.
  - 2. The youngest brother must come to verify their story (20)
- III. Joseph Overhears Their Confession of Guilt (21-24a)
- A. The brothers' guilt comes to the surface (21)
    - 1. The remembrance of what they did to their brother comes out
    - 2. They realize God is punishing them for what they did
      - a. Here we realize that Joseph cried and screamed and they ignored him
      - b. They understand that retribution is coming upon them
      - c. Sounds like confession and remorse – like deserve punishment
    - 3. Joseph realizes for first time that they heard his cries and have been haunted by them
  - B. Reuben reminds them of his efforts to save Joseph (22)
    - 1. Joseph realizes for the first time that Reuben tried to save him
      - a. Even though we know it was for his own purposes.
  - C. The brothers didn't know Joseph understood them (23)
  - D. Joseph turns away and weeps (24a)
    - 1. He is overcome with emotion as he learns of these things
    - 2. He is not avenging himself – he is bringing their consciences to life
- IV. Joseph Forces a Choice Upon The Brothers (24b-35a)
- A. Joseph Binds Simeon In front of them (24b)
    - 1. Why Simeon? 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest – and Reuben tried to save him
    - 2. The second son of Leah held for the second son of Rachael
  - B. Joseph has their bags loaded with grain and their money (25)
    - 1. Setting up the situation as before
    - 2. What happened the last time they returned home with money and 1 less brother?
      - a. This would jar their memories even more when discovered
      - b. This would also jar Jacob's memory of the last time they returned without a brother
    - 3. The Test: will they put money over their brother like last time?
      - a. Will they leave Simeon there and say he died?
      - b. Will they risk their own lives to come back and look like thieves?
  - C. The brothers fear when one finds his money (26-28)
    - 1. One brother discovers the money in his sack (26-27)
    - 2. Their hearts failed them when they saw it
      - a. Lit. "their hearts went out"
      - b. they were dismayed, afraid, shocked
    - 3. They see God's punishment upon them
      - a. They again look at this through the lens of their crime
      - b. They see the hand of God returning their deed on their head
      - c. Now they will be accused of being spies and thieves.
      - d. They will surely die if they return to get Simeon

- D. The brothers tell Jacob of the events in Egypt (29-34)
  - 1. For the most part, they are pretty accurate
  - 2. They add “we will be able to trade in the land”
  - 3. They leave out the binding of Simeon, and the prison
- E. The brothers discover all their money in their sacks (35a)
  - 1. Now they are really afraid – this wasn’t just a mistake
  - 2. Now there is no way they can explain it as anything other than theft.
  - 3. What is Jacob thinking?
    - a. All the brothers return except one – just like before
    - b. They all have grain they bought – they also have the money they brought
- V. Jacob Blames The brothers For All His Loss (35b-38)
  - A. Jacob blames them for the death of his sons (35b-36)
    - 1. You have taken away my sons – you are making me childless
    - 2. He now blames them for Joseph’s death (the 1<sup>st</sup> time he has)– and for Simeon’s death
    - 3. He accuses them of wanting to take his favorite son from him
    - 4. “All this has come against me” -
  - B. Reuben offers his sons as collateral for Benjamin (37)
    - 1. He probably means well – but offers his sons to be killed if Benjamin isn’t returned
    - 2. If I don’t bring your favorite son back -you can kill your grandchildren?
    - 3. He doesn’t inspire much confidence that he is willing to take care of anyone’s son
  - C. Jacob refuses to send his only son left (38)
    - 1. “My son” – will not go with you for HIS BROTHER is dead – he alone left
    - 2. Jacob’s favoritism is on full display
    - 3. Jacob’s words are cruel
    - 4. His love for Benjamin is expressed even more directly that his love for Joseph was
    - 5. He is my only son – what does that imply?
      - a. What about Simeon imprisoned in Egypt?
    - 6. Jacob is now mistreating the other sons instead of just showing favoritism

The testing of these brothers has begun – all this is to orchestrate their confession, repentance. Joseph has plan to save his family FROM EACH OTHER. God will test and try their love for one another and force them to deal with their sin. But first it is necessary to break them. They are having everything systematically taken away from them so that there is nothing left to keep their guilt and shame down.

In the same way God disciplines his children, so that they have to turn to the ultimate Joseph – Jesus the son of God. He can relieve our guilt. Joseph will reveal himself to them and forgive them, and because of what Joseph has suffered, he is able to save them. He has been exalted to the right hand of pharaoh. Jesus suffered in our place and is exalted to the right hand of the Father. Take your guilt and sin to him. Find forgiveness.

Proverbs 28:13 - Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.