

(God is Great,)

# God is Good

(and wants us to be good)

[worshipweekly.com/God-is-Good.html](http://worshipweekly.com/God-is-Good.html)

There was good reason for the ditty sung at the dinner table. Repetition and remembering are important. One can argue good is better than love. Love is a feeling. Whether love is good or evil depends on who or what you love and how you express it. Good, is good. "God is love" is not in the Hebrew Bible. "I will make all my goodness pass before you" (God says to Moses when Moses asks to behold His presence), Exodus 33:19. Let that be a teaser...

# Joseph

**Genesis 37-50  
(plus a little finishing up from Jacob)**

Finishing up Jacob first...

# Sources

**Rational Bible: Genesis, Dennis Prager  
Dennis acknowledges all his sources in  
the book**

**Sefaria.org (Bible translation used here)**

Only 2 volumes out so far. Exodus was published first because of the Ten Commandments, which, if everyone followed, we'd be practically devoid of human-caused suffering.

Pragertopia.com, \$10/mth, all five books lecture series verse by verse, from some years ago, very different on the details but the big picture remains the same. 241 hours, 199 lectures. Or \$5-600/book CD, USB, download.



**31:27 Why did you flee in secrecy and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with timbrel and lyre.**

Jacob leaves in secret. Three days later Laban finds out Jacob has left and pursues him. This is what Laban asks Jacob when he catches up to him.

Did Laban know he was lying? Jacob did. God did. The text does not tell us if he believed his lie or not.

Analyzing lies and liars is morally significant.

If you don't know you're saying something not true, it's simply an error. Make it right. There are habitual liars. It can become so natural. And the lies progress from innocuous to deadly.

The brain can adapt to dishonesty. Eventually the liar doesn't think he's lying at all, therefore there is no reason to apologize or correct. This is how people can lie in the name of their cause with self impunity.

Big lies have been the world's greatest source of evil.

Part of the liar's punishment is that not only is he not believed, he cannot believe anyone else.



**32:12 Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; else, I fear, he may come and strike me down, mothers and children alike.**

Chapter 32. Jacob returns to the land of Esau. Jacob was afraid of what Esau might do. He prays (begs) God for deliverance from death. But God long ago told Jacob He would protect him. Why the fear...

Everyone has crises of faith. Even those who have had direct contact with God.

For us to never doubt, God would have to make himself known all the time. The word faith would become meaningless.



**32:29 Said he,  
“Your name  
shall no longer  
be Jacob, but  
Israel, for you  
have striven  
with beings  
divine and  
human, and  
have prevailed.”**

More intrigue between Jacob and Esau. Jacob crossed a river (great significance, very hard to do) to get away. When Jacob is alone, a man wrestles with him overnight. He was struggling with an angel. The wrestler (angel) wrenches Jacob’s hip then says “let me go.” Jacob says “not till you bless me.” He must have realized he was wrestling with God’s angel.

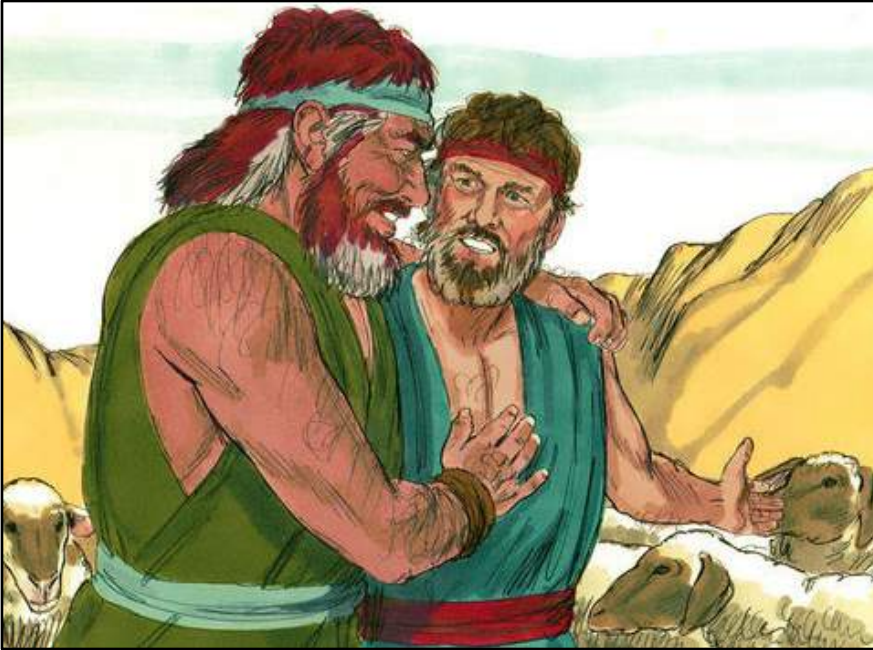
Israel = Struggles with God. The Torah makes it clear that struggling with God is not only OK, it’s required. How could God expect otherwise having giving man capacity to think, reason, etc.

Certitude leads to fanaticism.

We struggle with our parents sometimes, why not with our heavenly father.

God is telling secular Jews they must struggle with their atheism or agnosticism.

## Chapter 33



Jacob and Esau meet and embrace. They make up. They weep. Time heals. But, by the end of the chapter, they each go their separate ways.

## Chapter 34



Rape of Dinah (Jacob's daughter). Shechem took her forcefully, then speaks lovey-dovey.

A common practice of men. Maybe because he really did come to love her, or maybe because he wanted her to not seek revenge.

Most societies then considered it OK to rape those from another tribe or clan. He may not have thought of this as bad.

Shechem = son of a donkey.

Hamor (Shechem's dad) makes a deal with Jacob to exchange daughters. Jacob agrees if Hamor's tribe will be circumcized. Hamor agrees. And Hamor's tribe agrees.

But, two of Jacob's sons exact revenge (for the rape) and slaughter the innocents in town.

Not until his deathbed did Jacob condemn his two sons.



## Chapter 35



God sends Jacob to Bethel and instructs him to build an altar. The only patriarch thus instructed. All others built altars on their own.

Physical reminder to be grateful.

Gratefulness takes effort. Resentment lives on naturally.

God himself tells Jacob his new name is Israel. First time he was told it was a messenger.

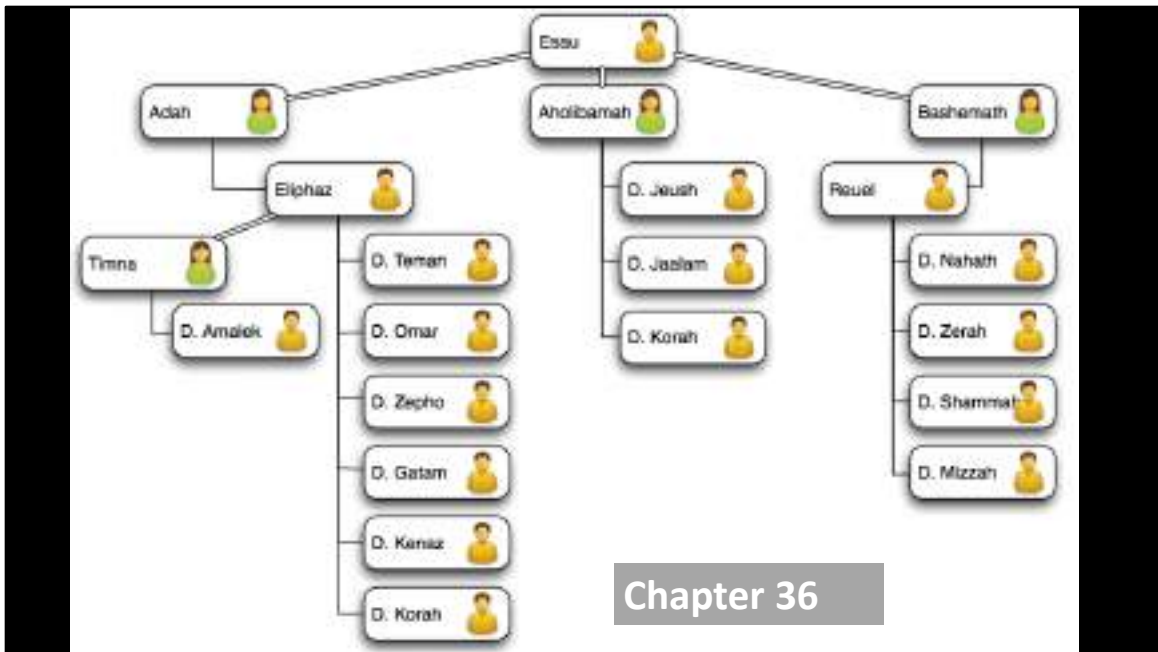
Jacob tells his family to rid themselves of idols.

Rachel dies giving birth to and naming him Ben-oni (“Son of Mourning”).

Jacob changes the name to Benjamin, probably not wanting to saddle his son with a constant reminder of his mother’s passing.

Isaac and his sons are buried together (eventually).

Esau was not a bad guy, he is buried with Isaac and Jacob.

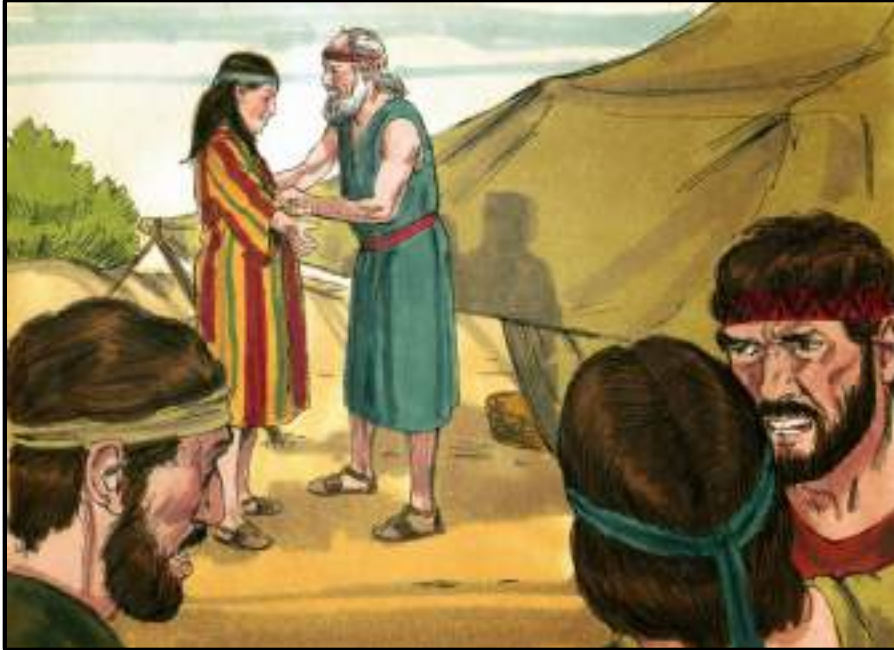


To emphasize that Esau was not a bad guy, Chapter 36 is dedicated to outlining his descendants.

Included is a story of conversion to Judaism by a concubine, Timna.

The patriarchs discouraged her, Timna, to convert.

It is made clear that Jews should not discourage anyone from converting.



**37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him an ornamented tunic.**

2<sup>nd</sup> reason his brothers hated Joseph. In previous couple verses Joseph snatched on them. 3<sup>rd</sup> reason is the coat gift.

One thing leads to another and this favoritism led to slavery in Egypt.

Jacob clearly did not learn from his own childhood about playing favorites with children.

We seem to learn only from our own mistakes, not from mistakes of others. Sadly. Benjamin was actually the child of his oldest age, but he chose Joseph (maybe B. reminded him too much of Rachel, now dead).



**37:4 And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of his brothers, they hated him so that they could not speak a friendly word to him.**

“Friendly” would be literally “of peace” (l’shalom).

Most destructive family happening: not speaking civilly or at all.

Allows demonization of each other. They plot to kill/sell him off without even talking with him.



**37:8 His brothers answered, “Do you mean to reign over us? Do you mean to rule over us?” And they hated him even more for his talk about his dreams.**

Joseph just told his brothers about dreaming that their sheaves bowed down to his. The first of Joseph’s dreams needed no interpretation.

The brothers didn’t take it well.

To some degree, this foreshadows world-wide hatred of the Jews as Chosen.

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in 5 verses that the brothers’ hatred is noted.

Joseph’s dreams come in pairs of two – recurring dreams were taken more seriously in the day.



**37:10 And when he told it to his father and brothers, his father berated him. “What,” he said to him, “is this dream you have dreamed? Are we to come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow low to you to the ground?”**

2<sup>nd</sup> dream has sun and moon bowing to his sheave as well – parents bowing.

Joseph shared this 2<sup>nd</sup> dream with his father, who got mad.

Perhaps Jacob thought his favorite son had gotten out of control. Or from father bowing to son.

But isn't Rachel dead? Dreams could do interesting things. May be referring to Bilhah, who raised Joseph as his mother.

And his brothers were envious (better translation than “wrought up”).

Envy is poison. Festering anger is poison.

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” Otherwise, the anger becomes toxic.

Either let it go or express it appropriately; but not fester.



**37:17 The man said, “They have gone from here, for I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan.” So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.**

Jacob sends Joseph to find his brothers and see if they are at peace (how they are) (uses shalom again).

Parents intervening between siblings often does not work.

Joseph goes in search of them, but can't find them. He found someone and asks about his brothers.

Without describing anything to the man, the man answers Joseph telling him they're in Dothan.

Joseph never directly speaks with God, but there are certainly many coincidences in his life, like this stranger.

Whether you see God or coincidence is up to you.

We do not get to choose what happens to us, but we do get to choose how we react.

Choose to be happy, and you probably will be.

Choose to live in a God-centered way, and you'll ultimately have faith.



**37:28 When Midianite traders passed by, they pulled Joseph up out of the pit. They sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who brought Joseph to Egypt.**

The brothers see Joseph coming “from afar” and plot to kill him. Older brothers say not to kill him directly, but leave in a pit. So they put him in a pit “and sit down to a meal” (callous). They do think of selling him to Ishmaelites, but then in 28 the brothers are not there. The Midianites pull him out of the pit and sell him to Ishmaelites. The blood covered tunic (that the brothers smeared in sheep’s blood) convinced Jacob he had been attacked by animals. The brothers let him think that. His father mourned him. The brothers did not sell Joseph into slavery at least not directly. They don’t know what exactly happened to him. Meanwhile, Joseph was sold to the Egyptians, Potiphar specifically, a highest official of the court of the Egyptian king.





## Chapter 38: Tamar, Judah, Onan... Decept

Judah, one of Joseph's brothers, found a wife in Canaan (a no-no).

They had Er, Onan, and Shelah.

Er married Tamar, but God took him (for something displeasing un-stated).

Onan should have married Tamar mostly for her sake, but he did not. Onan cheated everyone.

Another name for the book of Genesis would be Book of Deceptions (the list goes on and on).

Tamar acts like a prostitute to cohabit with Judah (as she has not yet been given Shelah, the last brother).

How Judah did not recognize her is another mystery.

He gives her some tokens of his which she later reveals to save her life. Judah makes good.

She has twins – who share in the lineage to King David and the Messiah. Moral values matter more than national identity.



**39:9 He wields no more authority in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except yourself, since you are his wife. How then could I do this most wicked thing, and sin before God?"**

Joseph is ultimately sold to Potiphar where he is quite successful.

Joseph's life is paradigm of the Jewish experience: persecuted, success, persecuted, success.

And often success in foreign lands.

He ends up in prison because Potiphar's wife makes a play for him and he refuses.

First clue of righteousness.

2<sup>nd</sup> clue is saving Egypt. 3<sup>rd</sup> clue: Honored God without ever hearing from him directly (1<sup>st</sup> of the patriarchs with no direct contact).

Joseph offered 3 reasons to Mrs. P.: ungrateful to his boss, wife of another, sin against God (how did he know the 3<sup>rd</sup> one?). Elohim.

Potiphar imprisons J. Did he believe his wife? Probably not fully (mild punishment).

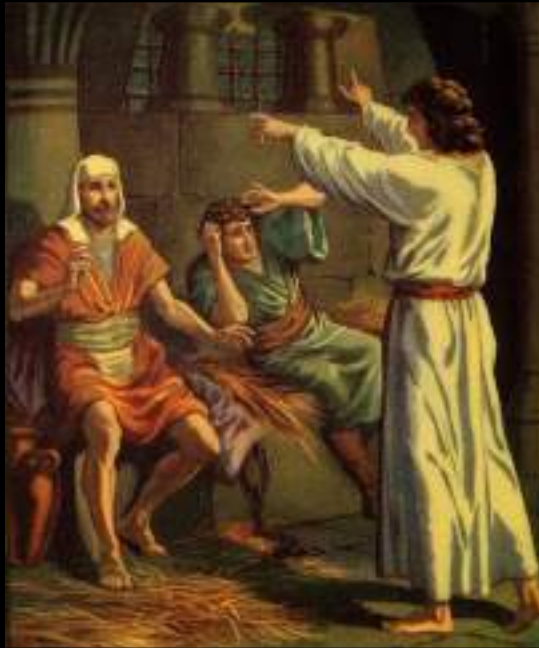
"Does it harm anyone" is a poor basis for morality. A sin against God is a sin, and stains your character, if nothing else.



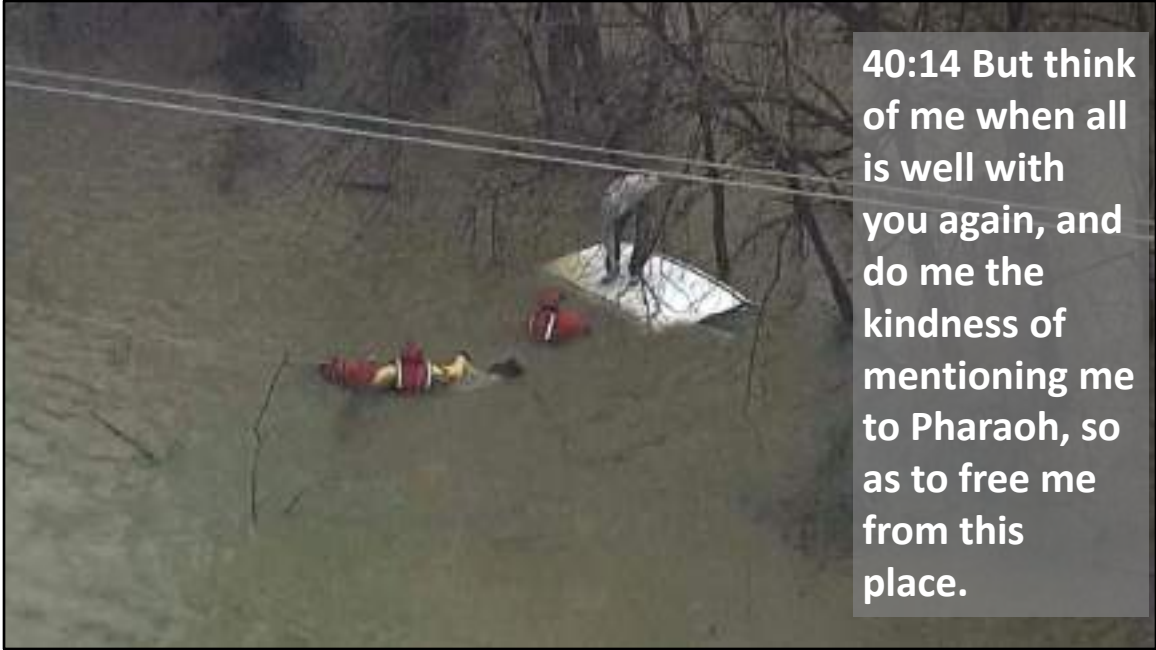
**40:2**  
**Pharaoh**  
**was angry**  
**with his two**  
**courtiers,**  
**the chief**  
**cupbearer**  
**and the**  
**chief baker,**

They “gave offense” to their lord. “office in charge of drinks”  
Bread was a staple. Egypt is widely regarded as the inventor of bread.  
Each had a dream (dreams in two are significant).

**40:8 And they said to him, “We had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” So Joseph said to them, “Surely God can interpret! Tell me [your dreams].”**



Joseph recognizes God as the source of his talent. Another righteousness clue. Recognizing God as the source: humility, antidote to arrogance. And tend to use those abilities in service to God as opposed to self. Great composers credited God on their scores and wrote glorious music. Today's secular music is written to glorify themselves. And it shows.



**40:14 But think of me when all is well with you again, and do me the kindness of mentioning me to Pharaoh, so as to free me from this place.**

Joseph acts to help himself. We cannot rely on miracles. We should do everything in our power to improve our situation.

Very religious man caught in rising floodwaters. On his roof.

Help offered by man in boat – no, God will save me.

Help offered policeman – no, God will save me.

Help offered by helicopter – no, God will save me.

Finally flood overtook the man and he drowned.

Asks God why he didn't help? God said, well I sent you...



40:23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not think of Joseph; he forgot him.

He **did not remember** him. Memory must be deliberately kept alive.  
Ingrateful.

People make generous promises to those who help them, but don't follow through.

Short memory is chronic.

Short memory keeps politicians in office.

Deliberate effort to remember, good and bad. Holidays and rituals. Teaching history.

Much of today's problems in America stems from ingrateful people who have no knowledge of history.



**41:16**  
Joseph  
answered  
Pharaoh,  
saying, “Not  
I! God will  
see to  
Pharaoh’s  
welfare.”

Joseph immediately replied, “not I, God.  
This is why tsaddick – most righteous accolade.



**41:33**  
“Accordingly,  
let Pharaoh  
find a man of  
discernment  
and wisdom,  
and set him  
over the land  
of Egypt.

Then he offers advice!





**41:37 The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers.**

Leaders like solutions.

Pharaoh was a good leader. Put his people's needs before his own.

Pharaoh was also a male – thinks big picture, macro.

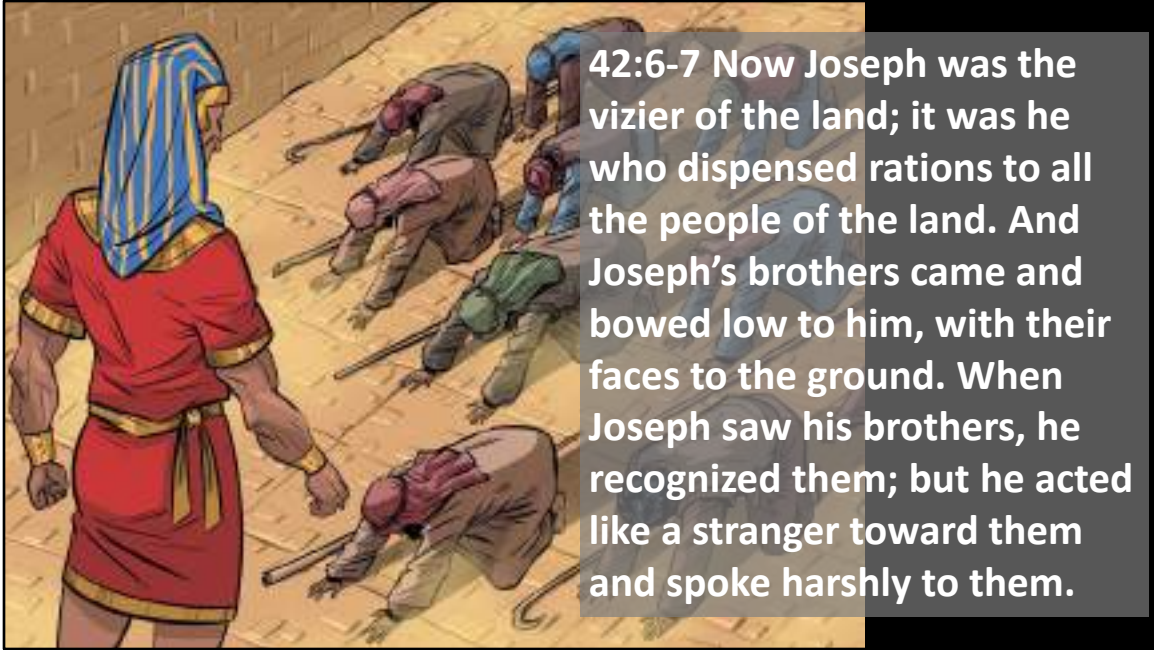
Almost the opposite kind of Pharaoh as the one who came to know Moses. The Torah is fair in pointing out good Egyptians.



Before the 7 years of abundance were up, Joseph has two sons.  
Manasseh – “God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home.”

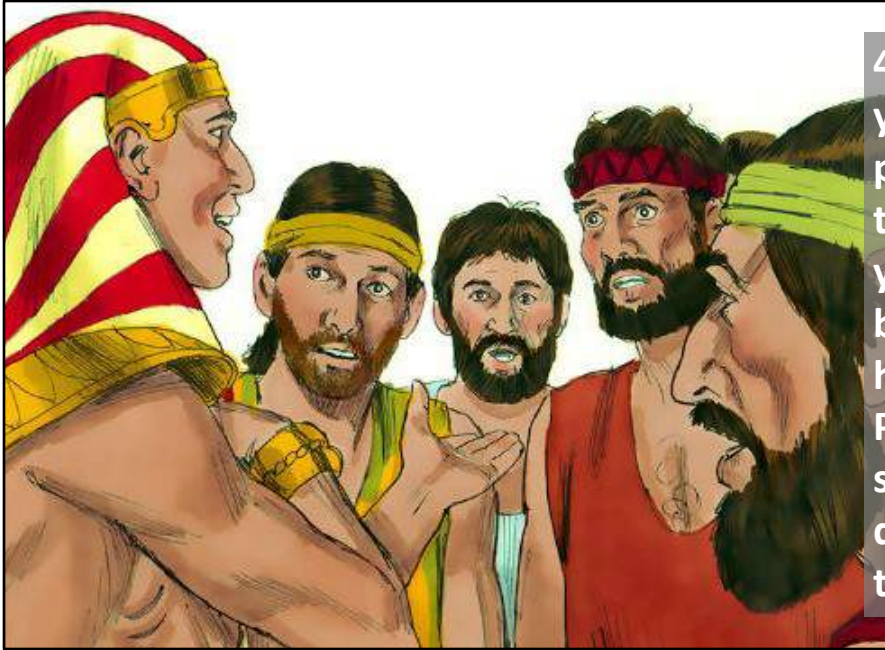
In our personal life, it is good to forget  
Joseph willingly forgot the pain of family life. Most of us would do well to do the same. (Forget “recovered memories”!)

A new child of your own helps. Can fill a hole or provide complete distraction.  
Recognizing the role of God. Joseph notes it was God who helped him forget. Many in the modern world think we can survive without God, either individually or as a society. The wrongness of this is hard to overstate.



**42:6-7** Now Joseph was the vizier of the land; it was he who dispensed rations to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed low to him, with their faces to the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them; but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them.

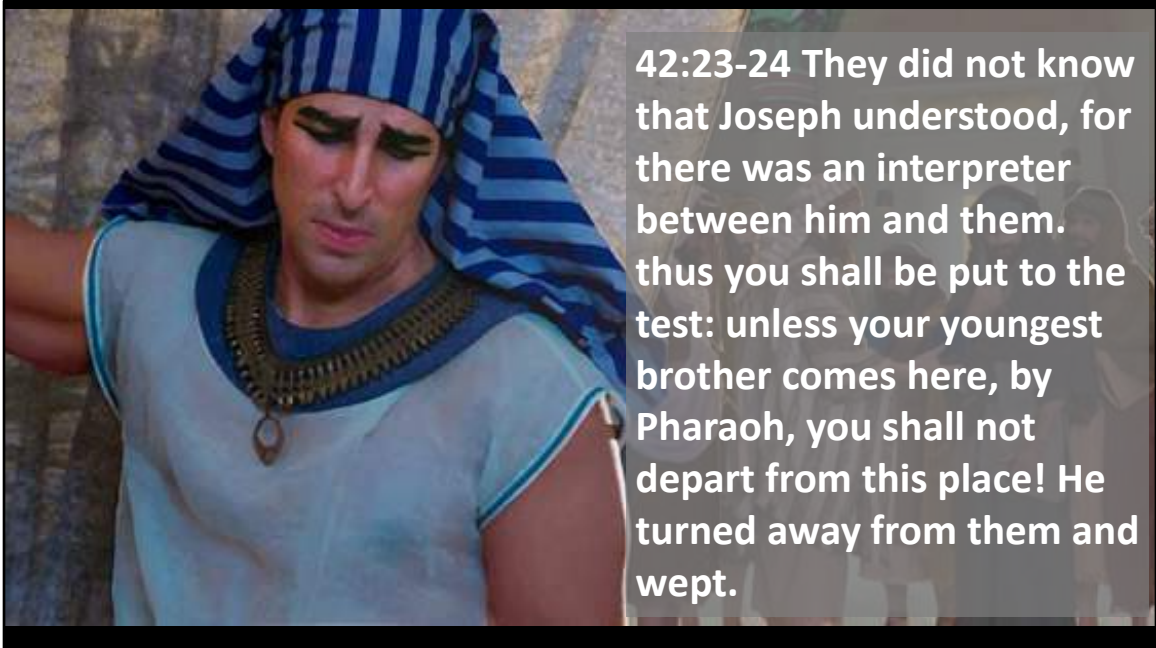
Remember “bow down before me” from his first dreams?  
Joseph wanted to find out if the brothers had changed (become better people)  
Why harshly? Maybe because of what they did to him. Maybe because Benjamin was missing.



42:15 By this you shall be put to the test: unless your youngest brother comes here, by Pharaoh, you shall not depart from this place!

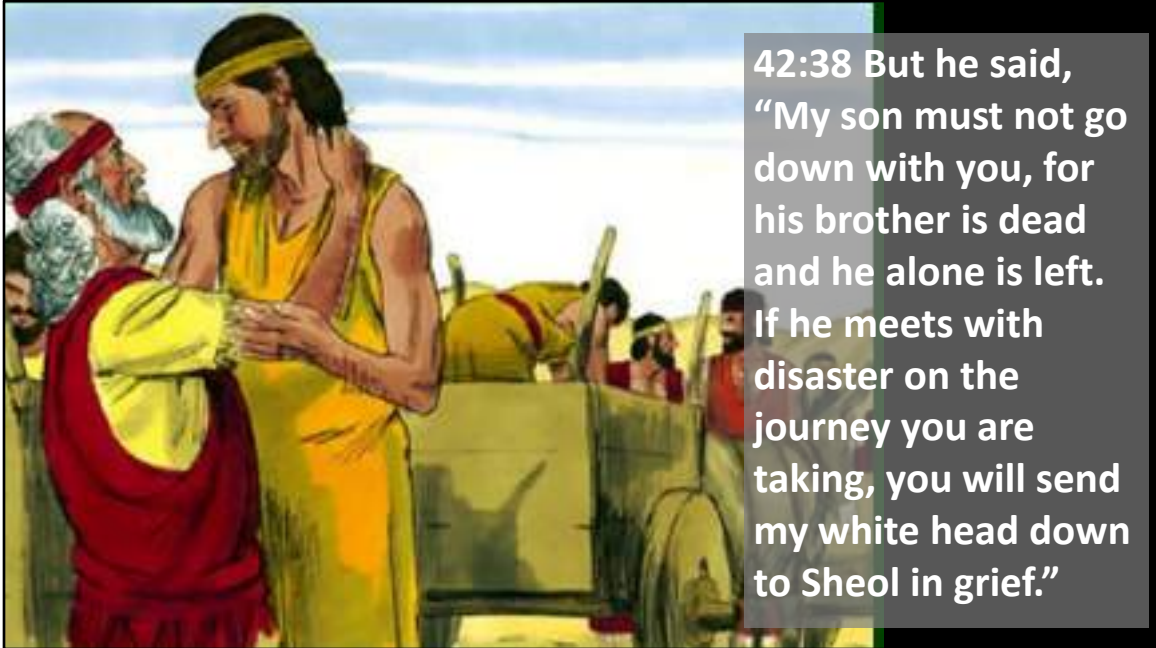
Joseph's test of the brother continues. Would they do with Benjamin as they had done to him.

True repentance is when you would not repeat a sin under identical circumstances.



**42:23-24 They did not know that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between him and them. thus you shall be put to the test: unless your youngest brother comes here, by Pharaoh, you shall not depart from this place! He turned away from them and wept.**

Joseph learned Reuben tried to save him. Real drama!  
After all the pains and suffering, this is the first time the Torah notes he wept.  
And why not?! He heard guilt and remorse.  
Reconnecting with family under most any circumstance brings overwhelming joy.



Joseph accuses the brothers of being spies and says they must bring Benjamin back to prove otherwise.

Simeon is confined and the rest are sent to get Benjamin.

42:38 - Jacob is told what happened (mostly accurately). Reuben is spokesman and does not convince Jacob to send Benjamin (still showing favoritism).

Opening Chapter 43, Judah is now the brother's spokesman. He convinces Jacob it's either starve to death or send Benjamin (using some of Jacob's own arguments when he first sent the brothers to Egypt).

Jacob says "take your brother and go" – can't even say Benjamin. Or, wanted the brothers to understand their brotherly responsibility.



**43:32 They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; for the Egyptians could not dine with the Hebrews, since that would be abhorrent to the Egyptians.**

National superiority. Every group in history has considered themselves exalted. Jews are unique in that members of other groups have believed the Jews were chosen.

Love the Stranger – greatest Torah law.

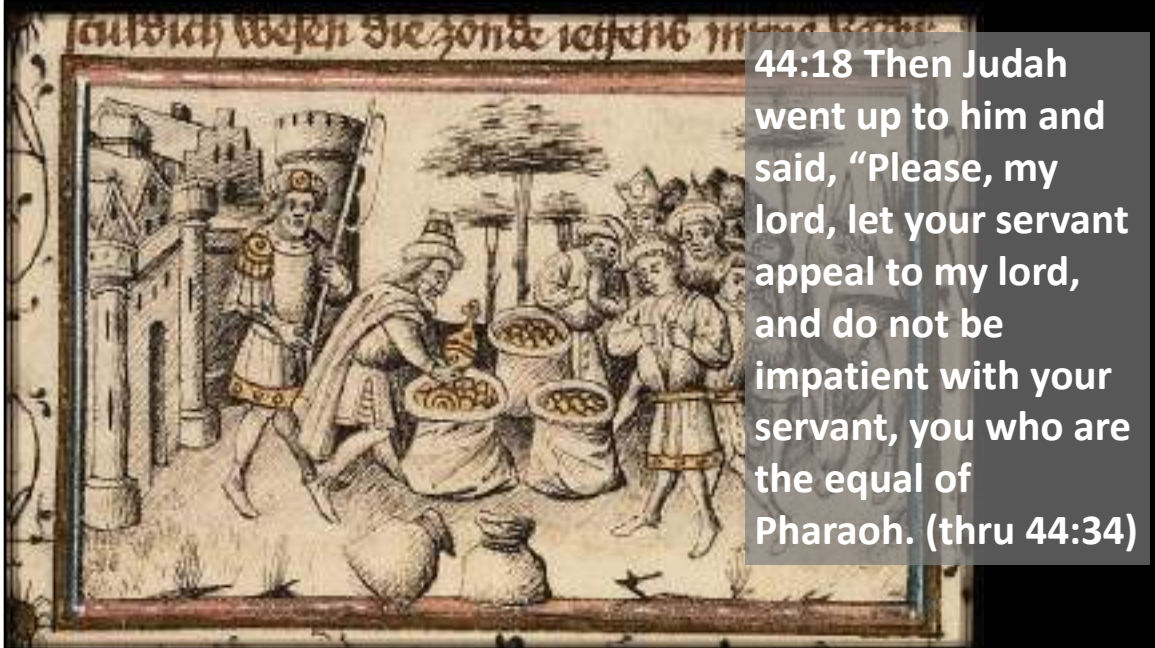
See yourself in others that don't look/talk like you. That aren't as real as you are.

Racism is partly natural. We don't see others as real as we ourselves are. Male-Female don't see each other as real.

Partly why marriage is important – Love the Stranger, the strange other sex. Not related at all.

U.S. is first stranger-positive country in history.

To overcome natural racism: God's image, education, experience friends of strangers



Judah's plea following the final test with Joseph saying Benjamin stole my cup (planted in his bag) and will be enslaved.

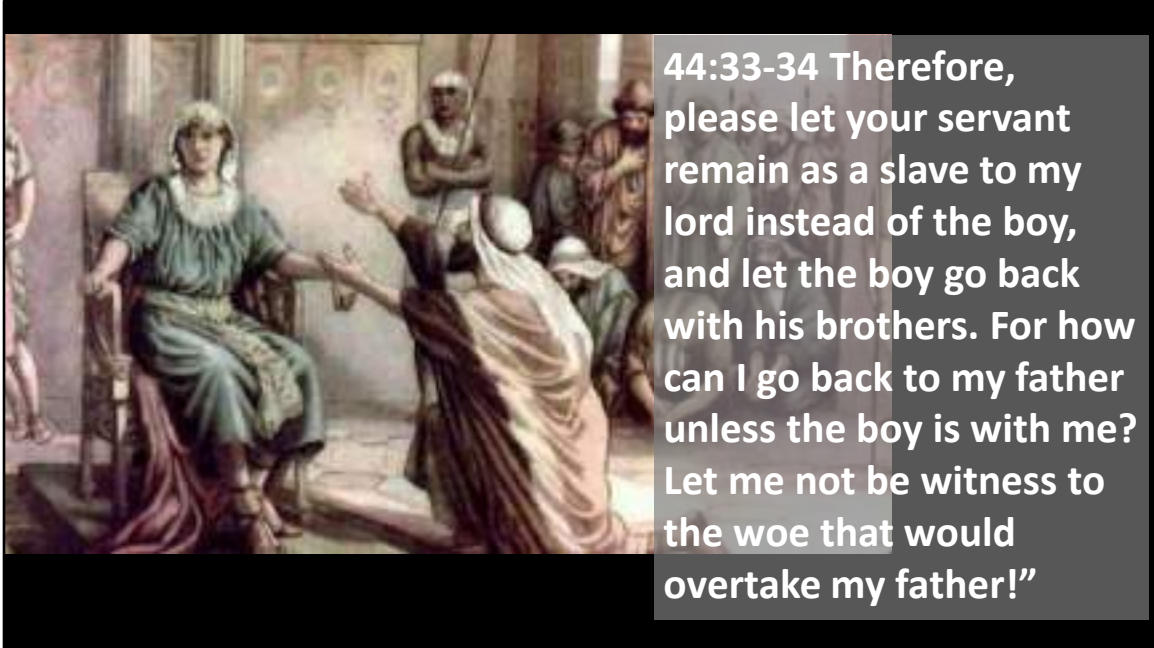
44:18-32 Mentions father 14x, servant 13x.

Judah recapitulates Jacob favoring Benjamin.

Joseph learns what his father was told of his disappearance.

Next slide...





**44:33-34 Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father!”**

Judah offers himself. He sent Joseph off to Egypt as a slave, now offers himself as a slave.

What goes around comes around.

Judah and the brothers are penitent. They are better humans. Considered a higher level of Jewishness than if you were good all along.



**45:1 Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone withdraw from me!” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.**

45:3 and they were dumbfounded. Shocked speechless, probably.

Joseph tells his brothers, in their language (no Egyptian around to translate), “I am your brother, Joseph.”

Pope John 23<sup>rd</sup>, born Joseph, greets a meeting of Jewish leaders at the Vatican, “I am your brother Joseph.” Catholics trying to atone for much persecution of the Jews.

Skipping much detail...

Joseph sends the brothers home to tell his father and they all return to Egypt where they settled in Goshen with this Pharaoh’s blessing.

This is how the Israelites came to be in Egypt.

Jacob dies and Joseph is at his side. (More fascinating stuff left out). Jacob was buried in Canaan where Abraham had purchased the land.

The brothers return to Egypt where they had settled and now are in Joseph’s (and Pharaoh’s) good graces. There has been some real reconciliation.

And Joseph dies.

So now we’re set up for the Exodus about 400 years hence.

Next session: September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6pm PDT

# The Exodus and Moses

Genesis 37-50