

**The Lord's Way
in the Life of Joseph**

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*"How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word.
I seek you with all my heart;
Do not let me stray from your commands."*

- Psalm 119: 9, 10

Preface

In this brief study we will trace the life of Joseph. We easily overlook the Lord's leadings in Joseph's life. Even more, we tend to forget that the qualities of submission, faithfulness, and generosity as displayed in Joseph's life are the fruits of God's grace alone. Apart from this, even our best works are corrupt and displeasing to the Lord. Joseph, like all of us, had a sinful nature. Although the Bible says little of this, he had to struggle against anger and despair much as we should. His trusting in the Lord is a shining example of how to live a life well-pleasing to God in an unbelieving and ungodly world. Without a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the fruits which He seeks in our lives will never be found.

May this simple guide to the Lord's leadings in Joseph's life be of service to our boys and girls and their counselors.

- Peter Y. De Jong

2. Is it right for us to weep when a loved one, who believes in the Lord Jesus, dies?

3. Give examples of the kindness, the generosity, and the forgiving spirit of Joseph.

4. What do you believe life after death will be like? Why?

Table of Contents

A Little Exercise In Understanding <i>Genesis</i>	Page 1
Growing Up In A Troubled Home	Page 4
The Lord's Message In The Two Dreams	Page 7
Sold For Twenty Pieces Of Silver	Page 10
Thrown Into Prison On False Charges	Page 13
Light Arises For Joseph In Prison.....	Page 16
The Strange Dreams Of Pharaoh.....	Page 19
Raised To Rule In Egypt	Page 22
Ten Brothers Come To Egypt For Food.....	Page 25
Bowing Down Before Joseph	Page 28
A Silver Cup In Benjamin's Sack	Page 31
A Happy Day For Joseph.....	Page 34
Welcoming Jacob's Family To Egypt.....	Page 37
A New Order For Egypt Under Joseph.....	Page 40
A Double Portion For Joseph	Page 43
Bury My Bones In The Land Of Promise	Page 46

Bury My Bones In The Land Of Promise

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth."

- Hebrews 11:13

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 50

Our lesson will be brief this time. But first, how much have you learned about the Lord's ways with Joseph? Also, have you thought about how he grew in the grace of our God, showing obedience, humility, faithfulness, patience, and love also for those who sinned against him? All these virtues grew out of his faith in the Lord who led him along strange ways. And to such growth in God's grace we are also called.

At the age of 137, Jacob, after blessing his twelve sons, dies. All the ceremonies with the honors, which Egyptians gave to high-ranking persons, are now Jacob's. Egyptians were very concerned about death. We read of a funeral procession second to none on record. All this took place with Pharaoh's approval. Joseph, heading the family and followed by many Egyptian officials, brought Jacob's remains to the border of Canaan. Then followed another seven days of mourning before the burial took place.

Upon returning to Egypt, the brothers were again worried. With their father dead, how would their brother, against whom they had sinned so grievously, act toward them? Once more we see the generosity of Joseph. He assures them and their families of his care and protection. Because he sees the Lords' leadings in his life, they will have nothing to fear.

But Joseph also prepares for his own death. He lives out his life with children and grandchildren. Before he passes away, he calls for his brothers. To them he gives orders for his burial.

A Little Exercise In Understanding Genesis

"Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens."

- Psalm 119:89

Do you realize what a wonderful book the Bible is? No other can compare with it. Of course, it alone teaches the Lord's way of salvation. But it is also "a little library," with its 66 books. Among these we find writings of so many different kinds - stories, songs, prophecies, letters, laws, and even a kind of drama. Each one will test our ability to read them correctly.

One of the most important Bible books is "Genesis." It simply means "beginnings." It tells us how the world began; then about man and sin and salvation. Without it not much of the rest of the Bible will make sense. Jesus and His disciples referred to its teachings many times.

But some people do not understand Genesis at all. Some because they do not believe what it says is true. But even believers can misunderstand it. They see only one interesting story after another with little connection between them. 1) First, because they think only about the *people* like Adam, Noah, and Abraham but forget that in each of these stories we are told above all about the *Lord* (the most important truth); 2) *Second*, because they fail to see how Moses, the writer inspired by the Holy Spirit, put all these stories together.

After the opening chapter about creation, basic to everything else, this book is divided into ten sections. Each has a heading, a kind of title. Try to find these when you have some time. In the Hebrew, the original language, the word used is "toledoth." And that is where some of the misunderstanding begins. In the NIV, often used in our homes and churches, this word is translated "an account of..." with a name following. This can mislead us easily. In the section we will study, it is called "the account of Jacob." And really, most of the Jacob story is told in

Another preparation, however, also weighs heavily upon Jacob's heart.

It concerns the future of Joseph and his sons. These two children had never lived close to the rest of the Israelites, but in the palace from which Joseph ruled. But as children of the covenant they, too, must be officially incorporated among the Lord's chosen people. So Jacob again summons Joseph. He is to take Manasseh and Ephraim with him. The ceremony which follows is solemn indeed. Jacob first recites some of the Lord's leadings in his life. Then because "his eyes were failing because of old age," he has Joseph and his sons approach. Upon the head of each he lays his hands in blessing, saying,

"The Angel who has delivered me from all harm
- may he bless these boys.
May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers
Abraham and Issac,
and may they increase greatly
upon the earth."

Joseph sees that the younger is blessed above the older. He calls this to his father's attention. But Jacob, prophesying the future in God's name, knows what he was doing. And with this, since now the two are officially counted as Jacob's sons, each will receive a tribal allotment when the Israelites enter Canaan. This, then, is Joseph's double portion. And in the next chapter, Jacob appoints Judah to be the family leader. From him will come the true birthright, the Lord Jesus Christ who is the giver and guarantee of every blessing for time and eternity.

For Your Discussion

1. Why do you think the Creation story (Gen 1.1-24) is separated from the rest?
2. Can you find the ten "toledoths"? Mention a few of them.
3. Why are the stories of Adam, the fall, Cain and Abel called "the account of the heavens and the earth"?
4. What do you think about those people who say we can believe that both Genesis 1 and the "big bang" theory with the evolution of man from some animal are equally true?

Your Song For The Day

How blest the man who thoughtfully
The poor and weak befriends;
Deliverance in the evil day
To him Jehovah sends.
The Lord will keep him, guard his life,
On earth he shall be blest;
The Lord will not surrender him
By foes to be distressed.

- Psalm 41 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #73, vs. 1)

For Your Discussion

1. Does the government have an ongoing duty to all the poor and weak, or only in times of emergency? What is really its calling?

2. To whom do our houses and lands really belong?

3. What duties does a believer have to heathen government? Is ours a Christian government?

4. How do riots and revolutions usually arise in difficult times? May a believer rebel against his government?

were Moses does not tell us. But they seemed bad enough for Joseph to speak to his father about them. Some immediately make him a "tattletale." Others, and this seems likely, explain that Joseph did not want the family to get into trouble as had happened when Simeon and Levi killed the men of Shechem (Gen. 35). Remember, however, that Joseph also had a sinful nature. So perhaps both explanations are somewhat true. The important thing is that it made Joseph hated by them.

Then we learn about Jacob's act of showing favoritism to Joseph. He gave him "a richly ornamented robe" or "a long robe with sleeves" or "one of many colors." All three are possible translations of the word used. Only the most important member of a family would receive one like that. Jacob did this because of his love for Rachel. But this again put down the other wives and children. And, as we know, this made the others hate him, so that "they could not speak a kind word to him." What a mess Jacob made of his family. And in what a dangerous position this placed Joseph, as we shall soon see. Yet even this was used by the Lord to open the way for him to be sold later as a slave.

Your Song For The Day

Lo, children are a great reward,
A gift from God in very truth;
With arrows in his quiver stored
Who joys in children of his youth.

- Psalm 127 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #269, vs. 3)

For Your Discussion

1. How do you try to make your family a peaceful and happy one?

A New Order For Egypt Under Joseph

"So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt - still in force today - that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's."
- Genesis 47:26

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 47:13-26

As Joseph had told his family, the famine would prevail in the land and throughout much of the world for another five years. He, however, did not live among them. For him there was still much important work to do. Another five years would pass before years of plenty and prosperity would return to Egypt.

Here Moses records some important facts in the story of Joseph, which are easily overlooked. These tells us what great changes took place under Joseph's direction. And to understand these, we need to know at least a little about the history of Egypt.

This land along the Nile river has an ancient history. Already about 3,000 years before the Saviour's birth, it had developed. Sometimes there were two kingdoms, one in the south and another in the north where the river flowed into the sea. Often there was war between these, especially when one tried to conquer the other. What complicates the story is that historically in Egypt, one royal family would usually replace another which had become weak. At times, foreigners, either from the south or the east, took control. But all the rulers, helped by the priests who always had great influence, presented themselves as divine, ruling in the name of the gods, and therefore they were to be obeyed without question. In fact, as was often true among other heathen peoples, the land itself was said to be the king's property. In this way, the people would serve him and his court as well as the priests, with their produce. That was the tax levied on everyone.

Joseph Has Some Very Strange Dreams

"His brothers said to him, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule over us?'"
- Genesis 37:8

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 37:5-11

As we read this part of Joseph's story, let us hold on to its "thread." Moses, as the human writer, shows no interest in the everyday affairs of the family. Instead, his purpose is to show us how the brothers became so hateful that they wanted to kill him. The Lord used this to prepare Joseph to save the family, many years later, from death by starvation, and make them strong enough to enter Canaan as the promised land.

One night - we do not know how long before he is seventeen - Joseph has a very strange and surprising dream. It may have shocked him because he did not really know what it meant. So, probably while in the fields with them, Joseph tells his brothers all about it. (This dream may well have happened during the time of the wheat or barley harvest. Usually dreams do have some connection with our everyday experiences.) In this dream he sees all of them binding sheaves in the field. Then unexpectedly his stands upright, while all the other sheaves bow down to his. And, of course, the brothers who hear him tell the dream become even more hateful.

But then comes another night in which Joseph dreams again. This time the sun and the moon and all eleven stars bow down to him.

The next day or two he wonders about those dreams and their meaning. Did they come from the Lord who had given his father Jacob such a marvelous dream at Bethel when he fled the wrath of Esau? Or did those dreams arise out of a proud spirit within him? When the answer does not come, he finds himself sitting down with his father and brothers after a hard day's work. He speaks about his dreams. Everyone realizes that when two such

The Bible gives us a list of the family members, that is, of the sons and grandsons. Here we will not pause long, later you can study this for yourself. But these family records are very important. They trace how, from "the seed of the woman" through Jacob and later Judah and David, the promised Saviour, a preserver far greater than Joseph, will be born. Do not question, as some have done, how young Benjamin already has ten sons. Not at all impossible. He was by this time in his late twenties and may well have had two wives! Just take the word of God as it stands. It is true and trustworthy.

Jacob, whose faith was often very dim, now sees it revive. The good news stirs thankfulness to the Lord for all His goodness. He brings sacrifices. And the Lord gives him rich promises for his future life in Egypt.

When the family at last arrives in Egypt - it did take quite a few weeks, with their wives and little ones - they are heartily welcomed. It is the Lord, who through Joseph, opened the heart of Pharaoh. A fine section of the land, called Goshen, is set aside for them. Although the Hyksos - or "shepherd kings" - were the ruling house, the native Egyptians despised those who herded sheep and cattle. Such work was only for the lowest class, and to this Pharaoh also accommodated himself. It was, however, a wonderful provision made by the Lord who controls all history for His people. Not only was it well-watered and fertile; but here, for a time, they would be separated to a large extent from the influences of Egypt's false religion. Settled, and cared for by Joseph, the family began to increase in numbers. Only after many, many years will they be strong and numerous enough to leave Egypt, travel through the desert, and at last return to take possession of the land promised to their forefathers.

3. Were the brothers responsible for their envy and hatred, even though the Lord would turn this into good for all?

4. Although the song for the day is first about David and then fully about the Lord Jesus, how do you think it can also apply to Joseph? Why is preparation for our service to God and fellowman always necessary before we can serve?

For Your Discussion

1. Why does it always seem so hard to confess our sins and say we are truly sorry?
2. How must we show sorrow for sin in our lives?
3. If Joseph was happy at the reunion, why did he cry?
4. Does God's use of the sinful act of the brothers in any way excuse them? How do you think they also suffered for this?

do this to one of their own blood? But the brothers sit down a short distance from the well and heartily eat the food, perhaps even some that Joseph had taken along.

While they are relaxing at their meal, the brothers see a caravan of Ishmaelites come from the east. Their camels are laden with spices and ointments to be sold in Egypt. And Judah speaks up. He suggests that they simply sell their younger brother as a slave. In this way they are rid of him without shedding his blood. The brothers agree and after a few hours, they pull Joseph out of the pit and sell him for twenty shekels of silver.

Some Bible teachers have difficulty with the names "Ishmaelites" and "Midianites." One goes so far as to suggest that these were two separate groups, the one pulling Joseph out of the pit and selling him to the other. A far more reasonable explanation is that this was one group, known by two names. The Ishmaelites were keen traders. But both tribes were descended from Abraham and lived near each other in Arabia. With this, the Ishmaelites could be called Midianite merchants because that part of the desert is where they also lived.

Now the brothers must explain why Joseph could not return home. So they kill a goat and dip the torn robe in its blood. They tell their father a lie. And Jacob weeps day after day for his favorite son.

Your Song For The Day

Then Joseph sold to slavery
With cruel chains was bound;
Till his predictions came to pass,
Distress and grief he found.

The king released him from his bond
And made him rule the land,
Subjecting chiefs and senators
To his controlling hand.

- Psalm 105 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal. 1976 edition, #210, vs. 5)

What A Happy Day For Joseph

"But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives for a great deliverance."

- Genesis 45:7

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 45:1-15

Families not only then, but also today, often find themselves in deep trouble. Some husbands and wives do not speak kindly to each other for months on end. Soon brothers and sisters also refuse to have anything to do with each other. Everyone carries grudges, which never seem to go away. In every case sinful and stubborn pride makes healing in such families impossible.

Even among Christians we find such situations; also in congregations called by God to live together in peace as "the Lord's family." Only when we seek peace with each other will He give His grace abundantly. And this requires humility together with honesty. Early in life we ought to learn this.

Listening to the sincere pleading of Judah for mercy, Joseph realizes that the God of the covenant has been at work in his family, suffering so deeply from envy and hatred. The wounds which he suffered have long since been healed. Now he sees this beginning to work in the lives of his brothers. He may not know just when and how this began. But that is not necessary. He knows that it comes from the Lord who had always cared for him. His heart is deeply moved to see and hear that they also have learned to live in love. In his father's family - and there is no question of his love for them - he sees the beginnings of a true spiritual renewal.

So deeply touched is Joseph by this, that he can no longer hold back his feelings.

Immediately he orders all his servants to leave the room. He needs to be alone with the family. Now he makes himself known to them. "And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it."

Thrown Into A Dungeon On False Charges

"When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying 'This is how that Hebrew slave treated me,' he burned with anger and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined."

- Genesis 39:19, 20

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 39:1-20

Sold as a slave for twenty silver coins! What a hopeless situation for Joseph who had been the privileged son of a rich father. We follow as he, with his hands bound, follows the caravan on that long and hot journey to a strange land. How the thoughts must have multiplied in his mind! What would happen to him in the years that lay ahead? Would he ever see his family again? Nor could he expect anything but poor food and rough treatment from the Midianite merchants.

At last, after some weeks, he arrives in Egypt. Here he is first sold to a slave-dealer who feeds and cleans him up, in hopes for a profitable sale.

But the Lord is with young Joseph. This will become his strength in the years ahead. In the marketplace the eye of Potiphar falls on the strong young lad. He buys the slave, not to work the fields, but to function as a lowly servant. There is work enough to keep him busy, for Potiphar is an important Egyptian. He is the captain of a select group charged to guard the life of Pharaoh. Such a position, of course, is well-rewarded. Potiphar can well afford a large establishment, a fine house and a pleasant garden with all the slaves needed to keep up appearances.

Without complaining about his lot. Joseph does whatever he is ordered to do. And because he works diligently Potiphar takes notice of the young Hebrew and gives him a far more responsible place. The captain makes him overseer of everything in the house. Now Joseph has slaves who serve at his command. He

the sacks loaded with grain, Joseph gives orders to a servant to follow them. He is to accuse them of stealing his cup. The servant obeys. They are all so alarmed that they immediately say, "If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die, and the rest of us will become your master's slaves." They then open their sacks. But the cup is not found until the youngest opens his. How terrified they must all have felt when they saw this! And Benjamin must have been even more shocked.

Joseph is still at home when the brothers are brought back. And he accuses them very forcefully. Judah, always a strong leader, speaks up for all eleven. All are ready to become slaves because of what was found. But Joseph relents. Except Benjamin, they may return home in peace. Now the test of family love and loyalty is pressed upon the conscience of the ten oldest. Judah continues his pleas for Benjamin's release. And what moves him most deeply is deep concern for his aging father. No sign of envy that both Jacob and now Joseph (whom they did not recognize) showed some favoritism to the youngest. In fact, there is some very deep feeling here. Benjamin, already in his late twenties and married, is still called "the boy." And Judah's love for his father is expressed over and over again. He offers to stay in place of his brother and ends his pleas with words intended to move the ruler, "How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father." Now Joseph can be sure that there is far more love in the family than before.

Your Song For The Day

How good and pleasant is the sight
When brothers make it their delight
To dwell in blest accord.
Such love is like anointing oil
That consecrates for holy toil
The servants of the Lord.

- Psalm 133 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #278, vs. 1)

Your Song For The Day

Jehovah, my God, on Thy help I depend;
From all that pursue me, O save and defend;
Lest they like a lion should rend me at will,
While no one is near me their raging to still.

- Psalm 7 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #11, vs. 1)

For Your Discussion

1. Twenty silver pieces was worth no more than ten or fifteen dollars. Why wasn't Joseph worth more? What about Jesus who was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver?
2. Discuss the importance of someone charged to guard the king's life. How are important people guarded today?
3. Since Potiphar did not have Joseph killed, do you think Potiphar wondered if his wife really spoke the truth?
4. How do you see the Lord's care in Joseph's life at this time?

2. How do you explain that the steward says, "your God" put the money in the sacks? Was this a special miracle to alert the sons?

3. What would his servants have said, if Joseph had actually sat down with and eaten the same food as his brothers?

4. What happens within us when we refuse to confess our sins to the Lord and to those against whom we have sinned?

Joseph. Quite a long time to wonder about those two dreams which made his brothers hate him. Did they have any meaning at all? Did they come from the Lord or from his own imagination? If from the Lord, whom he served obediently also in prison, was a prison house to be his lot for the rest of his days? Unexpectedly, change does take place.

One day two high officials are brought in. The one is "the chief cupbearer." The other is "the chief baker." Don't think lightly of their positions. Pharaoh is served wine daily, but only after it is first tasted by another, lest it contain a deadly poison. (Nehemiah was also a cupbearer.) Often such officials become trusted advisors to the ruler. But the chief baker in a palace is no less important. Under his supervision many people buy, prepare and then serve the food set before Pharaoh and guests who dine with him in the royal palace. With both of these officials Pharaoh is very angry. Somehow one or the other has offended him. Maybe there is a conspiracy afoot to kill Pharaoh, not unlikely since in Joseph's day the "Hyksos," or shepherd kings, have as foreigners, seized power in Egypt. And so they are put in custody until the guilty party can be discovered.

Again, Joseph is put in charge of their care.

One day, when he serves them, they look downcast. The night before, each has had a strange dream. Were they in the palace, they could consult some who claim the power to interpret dreams - a common practice among the heathen even today. But as far as they know, no such person is in prison. Then Joseph tells them that his power, when true and trustworthy, comes only from the God whom he serves. Each man then tells Joseph his story. The cupbearers dream promises speedy relief from his cell. But the baker does not. He is told, "Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you from a tree, and the birds will eat away your flesh."

In three days, Joseph's interpretation comes to pass. The baker is hanged. The cupbearer is restored to his position of

Bowing Down Before Joseph

"And the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times."

- Psalm 12:6

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 43

Once again, within only a year or so, the time draws near for the brothers to return to Egypt. By this time Jacob's family has grown. All his sons are married and have children. Also there are servants who need food.

So Jacob summons them to make ready for another long journey. Now the difficulties appear. Jacob refuses to allow them to take Benjamin along. Listen to his complaints: "Simeon is in that strange land; Joseph is long gone; now you will also rob me of Benjamin. Soon I will have no sons left." But the brothers refuse to go without their youngest brother, already a married man with children. And this time Judah speaks up. At last Jacob gives in.

But returning to Egypt, the brothers know they have to face the man in charge of the grain. And they are filled with great fear. In their sacks they had found all the money. Will he charge them with dishonesty and put them to death as spies? And what will then happen to Benjamin? Openly, when a steward meets them, they speak of their honesty and offer to pay for last year's grain. But the steward sets their hearts at ease. "Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks. I received your silver." Even Simeon is restored to them. But they still have to face that ruler who had spoken so harshly to them.

When Joseph returns to his palace at noon, they find his attitude quite different than before. They present him with the gifts from Jacob - the balm and the honey, the myrrh and spices and almonds. With this they bow down deeply to him. But they do

The Strange Dreams Of Pharaoh

"You may say to yourselves, 'How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?' If what a prophet proclaims does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken."

- Deuteronomy 18:21, 22

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 41:1-36

Paul, writing years later to the Roman believers, assures them that the Lord works all things for the good of those who love and serve Him. And certainly we see this in the life of Joseph.

At the same time, the Lord does everything in His own time. Often He seems to delay in order that He may test our patience in times of distress. And this is so evident during the years which the servant, Joseph, whom God is preparing for a great and glorious work, spends in prison. Joseph had to learn to wait upon the Lord's will for him. But Joseph also learns much of the Egyptian language as well as the customs of the Egyptian people.

Two years pass slowly after the cupbearer is released from prison.

Then one night Pharaoh has two dreams. Both are very strange, but also similar. They distress him as a superstitious unbeliever in the one true God. But that they come from the Lord is clearly taught here. He always keeps watch over the people of the covenant. He also remains deeply concerned with the heathen nations which He uses for His own purposes. Both dreams are faithful to life in Egypt in those days. It possessed the richest soil in that part of the world. Usually its harvests were so abundant, that grain was exported and sold to neighboring lands. And the source of all that richness was the Nile. It overflowed yearly to lay down its life-sustaining silt on the fields. Occasionally, however, the crops did fail because of a dry wind blowing from the east. And cows in the river were also a common

torn apart by envy and hatred as before? Do they realize the seriousness of their former sin? He keeps on asking until all the important questions are asked. And they do admit quite openly to each other, with great fear, their former sin and the danger in which they now find themselves. But, even though Joseph understands their words, they do not confess to him. He provides them with the needed grain. Knowing the famine will last another six years, he insists that, unless they take Benjamin along, there will not be grain for them. Instead, like spies, they will be tried and hung. One brother, Simeon, stays in Egypt to insure that the others will come back.

But that first test is not enough to bring the brothers to their senses. Read how one finds the money returned in the sack. They are filled with even greater fear. And when they open their grain sacks at home, money is found in all of them.

Whether Joseph knows that the word spoken to Abraham about the four hundred years in bondage is being fulfilled is not clear. Often faith sees in a mirror darkly. But in time the Lord does make His wonderful leading clear. All He asks is our daily trust in Him. Here Jacob does not stand out as a strong believer. He still feels too sorry for himself. For him the Lord has more lessons to be learned before his faith in the promises will be strong.

Your Song For The Day

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

- Psalter Hymnal (1976 edition, #461, vss. 1, 3)

For Your Discussion

1. Pause for a while to think how hard it was for Joseph to keep faith in the Lord while surrounded by heathens. What privileges do you enjoy in a Christian home and church?
2. How should we pray when we find ourselves in great distress?
3. How does Christian patience and steadfastness differ from that of unbelievers?
4. How can we help the many famine sufferers in our time? Should the church lead the way?

Even though he is second only to Pharaoh in the land, Joseph cannot be content with a burial in a strange land. He, like a prophet, reminds them of God's rich promises for them. Their descendants will surely inherit the land promised first to Abraham. Until that time comes, they must preserve his bones and then take them with them on the long journey back to Canaan. And the Israelites kept that promise. About three hundred years later Joseph receives a burial place near Shechem where he once had looked for his brothers. There he lies, awaiting the glorious resurrection from the dead, and the "better land" to which all God's believing people look forward.

Our life, too, is only a preparation for the world to come. Although we should enjoy the Lord's gifts here and serve Him as long as we live, we lift our hearts high above this life's joys and sorrows to be forever with our God. For all who trust and obey there is a country, a land and a city filled with the glory of our God. In it is that true peace and joy which nothing on earth can ever give. Joseph learned this. So should you and I, by listening and living according to the life-sustaining Word of the Lord.

Your Song For The Day

When I in righteousness at last
They glorious face shall see,
When all the weary night is past,
And I awake with Thee
To view the glories that abide,
Then, then I shall be satisfied.

- Psalm 17 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #24, vs. 7)

For Your Discussion

1. Should especially older people prepare for their death and burial? If so, why and how?

"the account of... Issac." Are you getting a bit confused? No surprise at all. The older translations have the word "generations," that is, what was "descended or born" of Jacob. In other words, this section is really about Joseph and his brothers.

Also remember that in telling the stories, Moses does not always do what we usually do. We tell stories in the time-order in which everything happened. That will be pointed out in a lesson or two. What Moses wants us to do is to keep the eye of our faith always on the Lord who is at work. Only then can we learn much from Joseph's life.

And now, why a separate section about the sons of Jacob?

Not so hard to figure out, when we remember that Genesis is about the Lord's way in dealing with the world, especially with those whom He has chosen to be His children. Notice how the Lord is preparing Jacob's sons with their families to become not just a large family but a people, an organized nation separated from all other peoples. And most of the rest of the OT will trace that story as the Lord prepares for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation not only of the Jews but of people of every nation.

Your Song For The Day

Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old;
Which in our younger years we saw
And which our fathers told.
He bids us make His glories known,
The works of power and grace;
That we convey His wonders down
Through every rising race.

- Psalm 78 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #150, vs. 1)

Your Song For The Day

O send the day of joy and light,
For long has been our sorrow's night;
Afflicted through the weary years,
We wait until Thy help appears;
With us and with our sons abide,
In us let God be glorified,
In us let God be glorified.

- Psalm 90 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #174, vs. 4)

For Your Discussion

1. How important do you think the place of our parents' burial place should be? Why do we bury the dead rather than cremate them?
2. What is an oath? When and how may we swear an oath?
3. Why was it necessary to incorporate these two sons by such a ceremony into the covenant line? Why do we baptize children of believers and that in the presence of a congregation?
4. Why do you suppose Jacob assigned a special part of Canaan to Joseph? Later this did belong to Ephraim's tribe.

Growing Up In A Troubled Family

"When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren."

- Genesis 29:31

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 29; ALSO 37:2-4

We cannot understand Joseph's life without seeing clearly in what kind of family he grew up. This was the first way in which the Lord prepared him for the work he would have to do. So too, our families prepare us for our place in life.

Some families live together very peacefully. Others, however, are full of troubles, usually of their own making. They quarrel and fight with each other almost daily. And Jacob's family was something like that. Laban, indeed, cheated him out of the wife he wanted. But most of the troubles which followed were Jacob's own fault. To get even, because Jacob loved only Rachel, Leah boasted about her first six sons, one after the other. Then Rachel gave Bilhah, her slave, to Jacob. Those children would then be counted as hers. So Leah did the same. Not until after ten sons were born did Rachel have a son, whom she called Joseph. And when we follow Jacob's family, we see how all that jealousy and anger and hatred was passed on to the sons.

All eleven sons were born in about twelve to fifteen years. So Joseph was about eight, when the family left Padan-aram. First they lived a few years near Shechem. Then on to Bethel and later to the valley of Hebron. Remember this to keep the story straight.

Now Moses begins by telling us that Joseph was about seventeen. One day he was in the fields with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah. All four were not much older than he. Usually the younger sons took care of the flocks close to home, while the older ones went off for more pasturelands. While there, Joseph either saw or heard about the sins of his brothers. What these

A Double Portion For Joseph

"Esau said, 'Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times. He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing.'"

- Genesis 27:3

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 47:37-49:26

The oldest son of a father, especially among the Israelites, was always looked upon with special favour. At the same time, he was entrusted with far greater responsibilities. He was to carry on the father's name and exercise leadership in the family. And for this there was the special blessing - a double portion of the inheritance.

Although the two usually went together, this did not always happen, as Esau realized. Often the oldest was shoved aside by the Lord's appointment; Jacob was favoured instead of Esau, and later Judah was favoured instead of his three older brothers. In Joseph's case, as we learn here as well as from Jacob's final prophecy, Judah will receive the leadership but Joseph the double portion. Also in appointing leaders and bestowing special gifts, the God of the covenant is sovereign.

By now Jacob has lived several years in Egypt. He saw his family well cared for and growing in numbers. But the day of his death - he begins to feel this increasingly - would come. For this he wants to be fully prepared. So one day he calls Joseph to visit him. He makes Joseph promise that his father's body will not be buried in Egypt, but in the promised land. His choice for a lasting resting place is that plot of ground which Abraham years before had purchased near Hebron. In the cave of Machpelah lie the remains of Abraham and Sarah as well as of Issac and Rebekah. Not for sentimental reasons, but because of his strong faith in the Lord's promises, Jacob wants to be buried there. This is so important for him, that he makes Joseph swear and oath that he will do his father's bidding.

2. Why do you think Joseph told on his brothers?

3. Look up on a map the places where Jacob took his family. How will this help to follow the story?

4. What do you do when you are angry with a brother or a sister? What should you do?

Now by the time of Joseph, when a foreign house was ruling, this idea was not so strong. Many people had begun to think of themselves as owners of their lands and houses and businesses. That independence could lead to a new uprising to dethrone Pharaoh and his officials, should there arise a leader strong enough to win a large following. It had happened before; it could also happen to this Pharaoh and his house.

With drought and famine in the land everyone, the rich and poor alike, were dependent on Pharaoh. For seven years a fifth of the grain had been placed under guard in his storehouses. And over all these Joseph had supervision. Indeed, when the people came for food, this was freely distributed. But it had to be paid for. And when their money gave out and they had no cattle to offer in payment, they remembered how it was in the days of their fathers, and gave up their property to stay alive. In this way a balance in the social and political order was restored. None were driven away from the houses in which they lived or lands which they tilled. They now held them in trust by Pharaoh's favour and supported the government by one fifth of what the land would produce when the lean years were finally over.

All this Joseph made into a law for everyone in the land. Only the priests were excused because of their high office. Some four hundred years later, when Moses wrote the account, this law was still in effect.

Here God is not giving orders for every government in the world. But that law kept the house of Pharaoh in power for many years and provided a stable order. Nor should we, like some have done, think of Joseph as a ruler who robbed the people of their rights. In no way did he take advantage of their deep need. Instead, he showed his wisdom in preventing riot and revolution which, in a time of famine, could easily disturb the welfare and lives of the people. And if we think "one fifth" of the income was too high a price, remember how many taxes every family in our countries has to pay each year. Under Joseph, even when prosperity returned, the Egyptians were not bad off at all!

dreams are quite alike, they must mean something. (Even heathen people took strange dreams very seriously.) Everyone around that campfire realizes that at least Joseph must be thinking that one day he would rule over the whole family.

Again the brothers are very angry. Jacob, possibly to keep from having even more trouble in his family, rebukes Joseph sharply and sternly. But - and this is important - "his father kept the thing in mind."

Your Song For The Day

In vision to His saints God spake,
From out the people one I take,
A mighty leader, true and brave,
Ordained, exalted, strong to save.

My chosen servant I appoint,
With holy oil his head anoint;
My hand with him shall still remain,
My arm his strength shall well sustain.

- Psalm 89 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #171, vs. 1)

For Your Discussion

1. If his brothers already hated him, why do you think Joseph told them his dream?

2. Did the Lord Himself send this dream? If so why doesn't Moses say so?

Your Song For The Day

Ye children of God's covenant,
Who of His grace have heard,
Forget not all His wondrous deeds
And judgments of His word.
The Lord our God is God alone,
All land His judgments know;
His promise He remembers still,
While generations go.

- Psalm 105 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #210, vs. 2)

For Your Discussion

1. Why was it necessary for Pharaoh to approve the coming of Jacob's family?

2. Do you think that the brothers did tell Jacob about selling Joseph into slavery? Why?

3. Is it important for us to trace our family history? If so, why? Can you see the Lord's leadings in the history of your grandparents and great-grandparents?

4. What encouragement did the Lord and then Pharaoh give Jacob? Do you think moving to a foreign land today requires the Lords' approval?

Sold For Twenty Pieces Of Silver

"Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him."

- Acts 7:9

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 37:12-36

And now we come to that part of Joseph's early life, which Moses highlights.

By this time the family of Jacob leaves its place at Shechem and moves at least as far as Bethel. Here are rocky hills, which do not provide enough pasture for Jacob's growing herds and flocks. So one day no doubt some years after the sad events at Shechem - Jacob sends Joseph to find out how his brothers are doing. And he is sent alone. Didn't Jacob realize how strong the hatred of the brothers was against his favorite son? And was Joseph somewhat careless? All we know is that as a faithful son he sets out on his errand. Obedience is a virtue he learned early.

For a while he wanders around Shechem where his father thinks the brothers are. But a man informs him that they, with their flocks, have gone on towards Dothan. That means several more hours of walking.

The brothers see him coming down a hill toward them. One exclaims, "Here comes that dreamer." And he or another adds, "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him."

Joseph falls into the trap set for him. Soon they strip him of the fine robe which he is wearing, fit for a journey to keep him warm by night. But Reuben, the oldest, now at least thirty and perhaps already married, wants no blood shed. He intervenes and the young man is thrown into a waterless cistern without much hope of any help. Joseph knows how jealous and hateful his brothers have become. How frightened he must be! How can they

Welcoming Jacob's Family To Egypt

"So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh had directed."

- Genesis 47:11

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 45:16-47:12

Now all the words, which the Lord had spoken years earlier to Abraham, about his descendants spending four hundred years in a foreign land, were to be fulfilled. Not one of God's words ever fall fruitless to the earth. His purposes, as we read often in Scripture, stand fast forever.

Joseph and his brothers are fully reconciled to each other. Soon they will return to Canaan and tell the good news that Joseph is alive and highly honored in Egypt.

Before they leave, preparations are made under Pharaoh's commands for the coming of Jacob's family. See again how greatly appreciated Joseph is in the palace for his wisdom in preparing for the long years of famine. All the animals are heavily laden with food for the entire household. Suitable carts for the wives and children are provided to make the journey easier for them. And Pharaoh orders that all their belongings - such as tents, and furniture and even the livestock - are to be left behind. There will always be enough to sustain their lives in the land where Joseph is in control under the king.

The brothers return to their father with joy. They tell about everything that happened to them. Perhaps (although the Bible doesn't say so), they tell about how they sold their younger brother years before. So surprising is the news, that Jacob cannot take it all in. But then they show him the carts. And the aging patriarch, who had mourned so long the death of his favorite son, is eager to leave Canaan and see him again.

For Your Discussion

1. Trace the long walk of Joseph from Hebron's valley to Dothan, at least 80 miles or more.
2. What was Reuben's intention with Joseph? Why? Did any of the brothers still love their father?
3. What arguments did Judah give for his plan?
4. How would you explain the two names for those who came along?

At once Joseph urges them not to be distressed or angry with themselves. He is not angry with them. How could he be? By experience he learned how, in that sinful deed of his brothers, the Lord was at work. He had been sent ahead by God to prepare a way of deliverance, also for his family, in the years of famine. He sees, too, that God also made him a blessing for Pharaoh and his people. What they had intended for evil, the Lord of all the earth used for good. His own life had been so graciously preserved in every distress and danger. Now he is being used - and let the Lord alone be praised - to preserve life on the earth.

He also explains that five more years of famine will follow. Therefore the brothers are to return to Canaan. They must tell their father of everything that happened, also that his son Joseph is alive and well. Also the whole family of Jacob is to come down to Egypt. Under his care they will prosper. Throwing his arms around Benjamin whom he had never seen before, he blesses all his brothers. Their fear is now turned into hope for the years ahead. Joyfully they can be reconciled to their father against whom they had also sinned so grievously.

How wonderful is the grace of God. It heals the wounds of life. It dries every tear when hope is restored. It opens the way to a safe future for all who learn to trust His ways.

Your Song For The Day

I thought upon the days of old,
The years departed long,
I held communion with my heart,
By night recalled my song.

O God, most holy is Thy way,
Most perfect, good, and right;
Thou art the only living God,
The God of wondrous might.

- Psalm 77 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #147, vss. 1, 6)

supervises both house and garden. He sees to it that meals are well-prepared and served according to the Egyptian diet. No more menial tasks like scrubbing floors or washing dishes. Every part of the house is open to Joseph - the office where records are kept, the parlors where the captain can relax with friends, and even the private rooms. And under Joseph's care, a blessing rests on that house. The days and months have become more pleasant for the young Hebrew slave.

But the Lord, preparing him for a far greater work of which he still knows nothing, puts him to another test.

In that house lives a very pampered and dangerous woman. She is Potiphar's wife. With slaves at her command, she can spend most of her days in idleness. This is the devil's workshop.

As Joseph diligently goes about the business of the day, she lets her eye fall with sinful desire on the handsome young man. She wants some pleasant diversion for an hour or two. And cleverly she uses all the wiles of a wicked woman. Day after day she tries without success to entice him. He refuses to sin against Potiphar who trusted him with all his affairs. Even more he will not sin against the Lord who has blessed him in his work. But one day that woman, no longer to be denied what she wants, takes hold of Joseph's robe and repeats her invitation. When he turns away, she still holds it firmly in her hands. Now her screaming brings the other slaves into the chamber. And angry at not getting her way, she falsely accuses Joseph of the sin into which she sought to entice him.

Potiphar is enraged when she tells him her story. He is so angry that he immediately orders Joseph be thrown into the king's prison. Don't be surprised that Joseph does not try to defend himself. After all, a slave is a nonperson, one without any rights. All the months of faithful service are completely forgotten by the captain whom Joseph had served so well. No one is present to stand up for him. Strange must the Lord's ways have seemed to him on that day. And now, a new and even darker period begins in Joseph's life.

For Your Discussion

1. Why did Joseph have the cup put in Benjamin's sack?
2. Should people ever be frightened into making confession of their sins?
3. Isn't it a disgrace to call a married man of twenty-five "a boy"? Is the youngest in your family a favorite?
4. How should we treat our parents and grandparents when they grow old?

Light Arises For Joseph In Prison

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

- Psalm 27:1

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 39:20-40:27

Have you ever visited a prison? Of course, it never is a place where we would like to be even for a few weeks. But the jail in which Joseph is thrown without being able to defend himself, is far worse than any we know.

Nor is it the average Egyptian house of arrest, a place where those accused of wrongdoing are not usually kept very long. This is a special prison. Only those who have committed a very serious crime against Pharaoh are sent here. Careful watch is also kept so no one escapes. If any do, then either the warden or a captain, like Potiphar, are held responsible and put to death.

So great is Joseph's supposed sin against the honor of Potiphar and his household, that we are surprised that he is not killed at once. After all, a slave is not worth very much.

But again the God of the covenant safeguards Joseph's life. It does not take the warden (who had to see to it that every prisoner is fed while locked up) very long to notice that this young slave makes no complaint. In faith he submits to the Lord's strange leadings even though he does not understand them. Since a few prisoners may assist the warden in seeing to the daily needs of others, he notices that Joseph always does his work faithfully. In fact, it does not take long before the warden makes him "responsible for all that was done there."

We have no way of knowing how long he remains in prison. If he serves in Potiphar's house for a year or two, then at least some eight years have passed away before any change takes place. Every day - and then year after year - stays much the same for

A Silver Cup In Benjamin's Sack

"So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow."

- Genesis 44:30, 31

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 44

When we read the Bible thoughtfully, we are often surprised. Some persons and events we think are very important are told in a few brief sentences. Others, which we think are not nearly so important, the Holy Spirit records in great detail. We have such an account here. Remember, the Lord knows exactly what we need for our faith and daily life. No story is either too long or too short when we remember that this Bible is His precious gift to make us wise unto salvation. So study everything carefully. And always be thankful and content with it.

By this time the eleven sons of Jacob have feasted. How kind and gracious the ruler is to them now. So they prepare to return to their father. Even Simeon can go back with them.

Meanwhile, Joseph gives careful instructions to his servants. All the sacks must be filled with grain, but in Benjamin's sack they must "put my cup, the silver one." It is, of course, a very special and precious one. Likely no one except he ever drank from it. Strange, is it not? He has shown such a special interest in the youngest. Why the silver cup in his sack?

Soon we understand why this order is given. Another test is necessary for the brothers before the family can be ready to live peaceably in the land of Egypt.

However, it seems as if Joseph is trying to play a trick on them. As soon as the brothers leave with their donkeys carrying

honor. But ungrateful wretch that he is, the cupbearer forgets all about Joseph. Two years will pass before the light will fully shine upon him.

Your Song For The Day

Lord to me Thy ways make known,
Guide in truth and teach Thou me;
Thou my Savior art alone;
All the day I wait for Thee.

- Psalm 25 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #46, vs. 1)

For Your Discussion

1. In what ways is the Lord testing you or your family? Is every believer tested? If so, why in so many different ways?
2. How do you know that Joseph put his trust in the Lord also in prison?
3. Discuss how each dream fit the work of those two prisoners.
4. What did Joseph ask the cupbearer to do? Show also his unthankfulness. Why and how should we show thanks to those who do us favors?

not realize what they really are doing. Also, a feast has been prepared for them. But first Joseph inquires about their father. And when he sees Benjamin, his emotions are too strong to hold back. He leaves the room and weeps alone. Nor does he eat with them. As a ruler in Egypt, he follows its regulations for food.

Then all eleven brothers are surprised, almost shocked at what they see. All are seated in order of their age, surely a "hint" that this ruler knew them far better than they realized. They also speak of this to each other. And Benjamin, well, he "receives five times as much as anyone else." Still their eyes are not opened to see that Joseph acknowledged only the youngest as his full brother, as the son of Rachel his own mother. Unconfessed sins - for the brothers had not confessed their cruelty to their father either - have a compelling way of closing our eyes to the Lord's leadings.

Your Song For The Day

While I kept guilty silence
My strength was spent with grief,
Thy hand was heavy on me,
My soul found no relief;
But when I owned my trespass,
My sin hid not from Thee,
When I confessed transgression,
Then Thou forgavest me.

- Psalm 32 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #55, vs. 2)

For Your Discussion

1. Was Jacob still showing favoritism to one son above the rest?

sight. To escape the heat and flies, they would submerge themselves in the river until ready to graze again on the reeds along the edge. All this Pharaoh tells in detail to "the wise men" of Egypt. These are priests who cast spells and claim power to interpret dreams. But this time no one called into the ruler's presence can explain their meaning.

Then the cupbearer, who is listening, confesses his failing. He speaks about what Joseph did for him two years earlier. And immediately the prisoner is sent for. When he is shaved and changes his clothes, he stands before Pharaoh to hear about the dreams. When asked to explain them, Joseph in a single word ("it-is-not-in-me") witnesses to the wisdom and power of the Lord. At the same time he says that the king's desire to know their meaning will be given.

Both dreams announce that new times will come for Egypt. Seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine in which the good years will soon be forgotten. Everyone will be faced with a famine of the most severe kind. And Joseph, whose insight comes from the Lord alone, suggests that Pharaoh make all the provisions necessary "so that all the country may not be ruined." And that ruler, not like the forgetful cupbearer, takes careful note of all that has been said.

Your Song For The Day

Happy is the man that chooses
Israel's God to be his aid;
He is blest whose hope of blessing
On the Lord his God is stayed.
Heaven and earth the Lord created,
Seas and all that they contain;
He delivers from oppression,
Righteousness He will maintain.

- Psalm 146 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, #301, vs. 2)

For Your Discussion

1. Look on a map and see why Egypt's eastern border could be easily crossed by spies and armies.
2. Did Joseph show an unforgiving spirit? Did he treat the brothers too harshly? Must we forgive others their sins against us, if they don't confess them to us?
3. What do you think about Reuben here? In the Bible his reputation often is not very good.
4. Did Jacob feel too sorry for himself? What happens to us when we do?

Raised To Rule In Egypt

"The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free. He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed, to discipline his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom."

- Psalm 105:20-22

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 41:37-57

So well-pleased was Pharaoh with the wisdom which Joseph shows, also in his suggestions to prepare for the years of famine, that he takes counsel with his officials. "Can we find anyone like this man," he asks, in a question which needs no answer, "one in whom is the spirit of God?" And then Joseph is appointed to be second over the entire land. Only Pharaoh has greater power and will make the final decisions.

Also this part of the Bible is attacked. Some argue that what we read here simply cannot be true. If you have not yet heard their objections, sooner or later you will. And you should be prepared for this.

Listen to a few of them: "How could a foreign slave, even if he had great wisdom, replace all the other officials in power? And surely not over the palace itself; supervising it would be given only to a fellow Egyptian." Or listen to another argue: "Traveling all over Egypt? Impossible for one man to do. And marrying into the highly privileged class of the priests? Absurd to take this seriously." And how could a heathen who worshiped so many gods really speak about "the spirit of God"? All we have here - so these critics say - is a neat story drawn from Moses' imagination (that is, if he really wrote the book of Genesis!) to explain how a few wandering tribes happened to enter Egypt. To each of these the right answers can easily be given. Just read and think into the passage.

Immediately Pharaoh appoints Joseph as second in charge. To him he gives his signet ring so that Joseph can make and

Ten Brothers Come To Egypt For Food

"'Why do you just keep looking at each other?' He continued, 'I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, that we may live and not die.'"

- Genesis 42:1, 2

SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 42

How mysterious are the ways of the Lord especially with His people. They are always past our finding out, until we learn to see life in the light of His word.

The same is true in this story. Occasionally Egypt, the bread-basket of the world in those days, had a famine when the Nile's waters were not as rich as usual or when a mighty east wind shriveled the early grain. But a famine for seven years was unheard of. And not only Egypt, but also the neighboring lands suffered from the long drought.

So one day, when the famine is very severe, Jacob speaks to his sons. He accuses them of doing nothing while they and their families are beginning to starve. Listening to him, all the brothers, except Benjamin, set out on the long journey with their donkeys, in the hope that they can buy enough grain for a whole year.

Soon they arrive in the land of Egypt and must appear before Joseph. We must not think that Joseph serves in the warehouses of all the store cities. For that, he has assistants, supervised by him. But here are ten foreigners, men from Canaan. And they might prove to be dangerous. Here Egypt's border was quite unprotected. In the past, enemies had crossed it to raid and even seize control. So it seems likely that all foreigners, especially when the group is as large as ten, are under suspicion. Of course, Joseph recognizes them. But he follows the usual custom of questioning them at length.

It almost sounds as if he is trying to get even for their treachery in selling him as a slave twenty years before. Really not. He puts them to a much-needed test. Is Jacob's family still as

2. How often do you think Joseph remembered and wondered about his dreams when in prison?

3. What is the importance of the signet ring?

4. Was it wrong for Joseph to marry a heathen lady? Explain the meaning of the names of his two sons.

enforce all the laws needed to provide for the seven famine years. Also, he is arrayed in fine linen robes, a sign of royal position. He is given a gold chain as well as a chariot with servants running ahead to herald his approach. In this way Joseph goes to all the principal towns where food will be gathered and stored.

But there is still more. Pharaoh orders that the daughter of a priest be given him in marriage. And this, too, was directed by the Lord. This gave Joseph access to the priestly class with its great powers. To them, so the Bible says, he teaches wisdom. His name is changed, a common custom. Now he is called "Zaphenath-Paneah," the one who feeds the people.

The names Joseph gave his two sons show that Joseph did not forget the Lord and His service. All his past sorrows are dismissed, for now he sees how the Lord is making his early dreams come true. And when the famine years come, there is abundance to keep the Egyptians from starvation. Soon people from other countries also come to buy food. The God of heaven and earth is working out His purposes for salvation!

Your Song For The Day

The Lord upholds the faltering feet
And makes the weak securely stand;
The burdened ones, bowed down with grief,
Are helped by His most gracious hand.
The eyes of all upon Thee wait,
By Thee their wants are all supplied;
Thine open hand is bountiful,
And every soul is satisfied.

- Psalm 145 (Metrical version found in Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition, # 300, vs. 1)

For Your Discussion

1. Why does the Lord, who is gracious, still send famines? Why also these seven years?