

## Genesis 42

Verses 1- 5

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, “Why are you staring at one another?” <sup>2</sup> Then he said, “Look, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.” <sup>3</sup> So ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. <sup>4</sup> But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, “I am afraid that harm may happen to him.” <sup>5</sup> So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, because the famine was *also* in the land of Canaan.

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, “Why are you staring at one another?”

10 of the 11 boys at home with Jacob are between the ages of 38 and 45 and yet they seem unable to make a decision about what to do.

See chart 4205

Ch	Person	Event	Age	Year
27 - 28	Jacob	Trip to Haran	77	1759
29	Jacob	7 years for Rachel	77-84	1752
29 - 30	Jacob	7 years and 11 kids	84-91	1752 - 1745
30	Jacob	Joseph born	91	1745
31	Jacob	6 years for the flocks	97	1739
32-33		Jacon & Esau reunite	97	1739
35	Jacob	Benjamin born	97	1739
37	Joseph	Sold to Ishmaelites	17	1728
40	Joseph	Cupbearer and Baker	28	1717
35	Isaac	Isaac dies	180	1716
41	Joseph	Years of famine	38-44	1707 - 1701
45	Joseph	5 years of famine left	40	1705

**<sup>4</sup> But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may happen to him."**

Benjamin had become Jacob's favorite son and he refused to entrust Benjamin to his other sons on this trip to Egypt. No one could blame Jacob for reaching that conclusion given what had happened to Joseph.

**<sup>5</sup> So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, because the famine was *also* in the land of Canaan.**

Numerous groups of people from many different places were coming to Egypt.

Verses 6 - 7

**<sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold grain to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him *with their faces* to the ground. <sup>7</sup> When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. He said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."**

**<sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold grain to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him *with their faces* to the ground.**

Even though Joseph was 2<sup>nd</sup> only to the king it seems he took a very active role in deciding who would get grain. If he had delegated this role to another, he might have missed the opportunity to confront his brothers.

His first dream concerning his brothers bowing down to him came true at this moment and the second dream that included his father bowing down to him will soon come true.

**<sup>7</sup> When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly.**

Before Joseph shows kindness to his brothers he is going to let them agonize a bit over their role in treating him like an enemy.

Verses 8 - 17

<sup>8</sup> But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him.  
<sup>9</sup> And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and he said to them, “**You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.**” <sup>10</sup> And they said to him, “No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.” <sup>11</sup> We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.” <sup>12</sup> Yet he said to them, “No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!” <sup>13</sup> But they said, “Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive.” <sup>14</sup> Yet Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies; <sup>15</sup> by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here! <sup>16</sup> Send one of you and have him get your brother, while you remain confined, so that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, you are certainly spies!” <sup>17</sup> So he put them all together in prison for three days.

<sup>9</sup> And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and he said to them, “**You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.**”

His brothers had treated him like an enemy, now it was his turn to treat them like the enemy. The accusation that they were spies made them an enemy of the state.

<sup>11</sup> **We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.**”

Their response that they were all sons of one man was meant to refute the claim that they were spies because no father would risk sending ten sons on a single spy mission. However, the argument that they were honest men was a little weak. They had sold their brother into slavery, and lied to their father about it.

<sup>13</sup> But they said, “Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, **the youngest is with our father today**, and one is no longer alive.

Oops, too much information. They shouldn’t have volunteered any info about Benjamin. Of course Joseph already knew this, but they didn’t know that he knew that.

**<sup>14</sup> Yet Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you, you are spies;**

They had given Joseph a pretty good argument concerning the fact that they were all brothers but rather than replying to that he simply repeated his accusation.

**<sup>17</sup> So he put them all together in prison for three days.**

Joseph did not allow one of them to leave right away as he had mentioned but instead put all of them in jail. He may have needed more time to consider his next move and in fact he did change his mind about how many could leave.

Verses 18 - 20

**<sup>18</sup> Now Joseph said to them on the third day, “Do this and live, for I fear God: <sup>19</sup> if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for *the rest of you*, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, <sup>20</sup> and bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified, and you will not die.” And they did so. <sup>21</sup> Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; for that reason this distress has happened to us.” <sup>22</sup> Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now *justice for his blood* is required.” <sup>23</sup> They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.**

**<sup>18</sup> Now Joseph said to them on the third day, “Do this and live, for I fear God:**

After the three days, Joseph decided only one would be left in prison. Perhaps Joseph considered the danger of someone traveling that distance all alone.

**<sup>21</sup> Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; for that reason this distress has happened to us.”**

The detail that Joseph pleaded with them and they did not listen was not recorded in chapter 37. His words still haunted them and their conscience would not let them forget what they had done.

<sup>22</sup> **Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now justice for his blood is required.”**

God’s law of reaping what you sow was ingrained in their thinking. They had not killed their brother, but they are convinced that he is dead and they are responsible for his death.

See Genesis 9:6

<sup>6</sup> **Whoever sheds human blood,  
By man his blood shall be shed,  
For in the image of God  
He made mankind.**

<sup>23</sup> **They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.**

Joseph learned, from what they said, something he might not have known until then, that Reuben had attempted to restrain the others.

Verses 24 - 25

<sup>24</sup> **Then he turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.**

<sup>25</sup> **Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, but *also* to return every man’s money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And that is what was done for them.**

<sup>24</sup> **Then he turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.**

Having heard the conversation of his brothers, Joseph got emotional and had to leave the room but when he had composed himself he returned to the business at hand.

Joseph’s decision to keep Simon in jail and release the others was based on the information he had just learned. Reuben was the oldest and responsible for his brother’s actions but he had tried to rescue Joseph from his brothers.

See verse 22 above.

Simeon, the second in command, didn't stop them when Reuben was absent so he was held responsible.

See Gen 37:29

**<sup>29</sup> Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.**

Simeon was not just imprisoned, he was also bound.

**<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, but *also* to return every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey.**

Eight of the nine men won't discover the money in their sacks until they get home but when they did discover it their guilty conscience probably blocked out any thought that this was an act of kindness.

Verses 26 - 28

**<sup>26</sup> So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there. <sup>27</sup> But when one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the overnight campsite, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the opening of his sack! <sup>28</sup> So he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and look, it is right in my sack!" Then their hearts sank, and they *turned* trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"**

**<sup>27</sup> But when one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the overnight campsite, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the opening of his sack!**

When the other 8 men opened their sacks after they got home their money was not in the opening of the sack. See verse 35. So the one person that opened his sack on the way home found his money returned to him. Something like this does not happen by chance. One has to wonder how much of this was planned by Joseph and how much of this had God directed Joseph to do.

**<sup>28</sup> So he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and look, it is right in my sack!" Then their hearts sank, and they *turned* trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"**

The physical reaction to this situation says a lot about a hidden sin. If not repented of, it amplifies over time, and can affect one physically.

In verse 21, the 10 brothers said, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother”. We know that was not the case but they are doing a good job of punishing themselves. God has given mankind a conscience, a little green cricket that whispers in our ear, and that voice is tormenting them right now.

The trip home gave them plenty of time to think about what had transpired but like many events in our lives, we often jump to conclusions that have no basis in fact.

Verses 29 - 34

**<sup>29</sup> When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him everything that had happened to them, saying, <sup>30</sup> “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. <sup>31</sup> But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. <sup>32</sup> We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’ <sup>33</sup> But the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take *grain for* the famine of your households, and go. <sup>34</sup> But bring your youngest brother to me so that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”**

All of this is a repeat of previous verses.

Verses 35 - 38

**<sup>35</sup> Now it came about, as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man’s bag of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bags of money, they were afraid. <sup>36</sup> And their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my sons: Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone, and *now* you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.” <sup>37</sup> Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, “You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.” <sup>38</sup> But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should happen to him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”**

**<sup>35</sup> Now it came about, as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bag of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bags of money, they were afraid.**

At this point the 9 men should have realized that this was a blessing. What were the odds that something like this could happen by chance?

1. That all nine bags had their money in them.
2. That one of the bags had the money at the opening of the bag and was discovered on the way home.
3. That the other 8 bags had the money father down so it wouldn't be discovered until they got home.

Some things do happen by chance in this life but this is beyond the scope of chance.

See Ecclesiastes 9:11

**<sup>11</sup> I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to the skillful; for time and chance overtake them all.**

**<sup>36</sup> And their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my sons: Joseph is gone, and Simeon is gone, and now you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me."**

His 9 sons couldn't see the obvious because their minds were clouded with the lies that they had told their father for many years and Jacob couldn't see the obvious because he was filled with grief and fear about his other 3 sons.

When we are totally free from sin (when we enter the next life) we will see things clearly and this life of conflict and confusion will end.

**<sup>38</sup> But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should happen to him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."**

By saying this Jacob is once again showing his other sons that he loves Joseph and Benjamin more than them.