

Genesis Chapter 41 – John Karmelich

1. Chapter 41 continues our story of “Joseph the Redeemer”.
 - a) In Chapter 41, Joseph goes from a slave-prisoner to becoming the #2 man in the most powerful country on earth who is responsible for the salvation of all the known world.
 - b) Now, I’ve seen people get promotions in life, but this one takes the cake. ☺
 - c) If you wonder why I consider Joseph a “redeemer” look how God redeemed his life!
 - d) In the beginning of Chapter 41, Joseph is a slave of a foreign country, rotting away in jail for a crime he didn’t commit. Its hard to imagine life worse than that.
 - e) By the end of Chapter 41, Joseph is promoted to the #2 man in Egypt. Egypt at this time was the most powerful country on earth. Their dynasty lasted for centuries.
 - i) Further, the #1 man in Egypt, Pharaoh turned all authority over to Joseph.
 - ii) Everyone in Egypt was accountable only to Joseph and Joseph was only accountable to Pharaoh.
 - f) Thirteen years prior to Chapter 41, his brothers put Joseph into slavery.
 - i) By the end of Chapter 41, Joseph ruled over everybody, except Pharaoh himself.
2. I stated in the last lesson that the one word I associate with Joseph is the word “Redemption.”
 - a) For Christians, Joseph is a model of Jesus as our redeemer. This means that we look to Jesus for our eternal salvation. We are condemned to eternal hell for the sins we have committed. Jesus has paid the price for us (i.e., “redeemed” us). We’ll see that model played out in this chapter of Genesis.
 - b) For the Jewish nation, Joseph is also a model of redemption.
 - i) Beginning in the next lesson (Chapter 42) we’ll see Joseph being used by God to “redeem” Joseph’s brothers and parents from an insignificant tribe of people to become a great nation to be used by God. The dependence of Joseph’s family also depends upon Joseph redeeming them. (Again, this is more “Chapter 42” than it is in this lesson.)
3. Another big-picture to see through the whole story of Joseph is to remind us that, “You never know what God has planned for us today and tomorrow.”
 - a) We tend to forget that God is perfect. To be perfect means you know all things.
 - i) This means that God knows what we are going to pray before we pray it.
 - ii) This means that God knows the answers to our prayers before we ask Him.
 - iii) This means that God knows the situations we are in, and the ones we are going to be in tomorrow, five years from now, etc.
 - iv) Often what God is doing in our life today is preparing us for some future event.
 - v) This is the case with Joseph. He didn’t understand why he was a slave or put in jail. The positive thing about Joseph is he never lost faith in God despite his circumstances. We get clues all through the text that Joseph lived a “God-centered” life as opposed to a “me-centered” life, despite whatever circumstances Joseph found himself in. We never read of Joseph having pity-parties. Whenever we read of Joseph encountering other people and Joseph speaking, notice how often Joseph gives God the credit for whatever the action.
 - a) When Potiphar’s wife tempted Joseph, he said it was a “sin before God”.
 - b) When Joseph was called in this chapter to interpret the Pharaoh’s dream, Joseph gave God all the credit.
 - c) My point is Joseph was always thinking, “What is God thinking about my life right now? Am I living a life pleasing to God in these key moments?”
 - d) Despite his horrible circumstances, God was preparing Joseph for great things ahead. Joseph had no idea God was going to do all of this.

4. Chapter 41, Verse 1, First Sentence: When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream:
- a) This sentence needs to be read in context of the previous chapter.
 - i) Two years ago, Joseph interpreted the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer. They were both in jail. One was in jail for false charges, the other was guilty.
 - ii) Joseph predicted the baker would be killed and he was killed in a short time span.
 - iii) Joseph predicted the cupbearer would be released. Joseph was so sure his prediction was correct that before the guy was released, Joseph asked the cupbearer to get Joseph out of jail when he spoke to the Pharaoh.
 - a) The cupbearer guy forgot about the Joseph after he was released.
 - b) It is expressed with this phrase of, "when two full years have passed".
 - b) Stop and think about all the things that have happened in your life in two years.
 - i) Imagine being in jail on false charges.
 - ii) Imagine being a slave under false pretenses.
 - iii) You see an opportunity to end it and well, nothing. Two more years of the same.
 - c) Joseph did not know that "two years a day make a big difference.
 - i) This is about waiting on God's timing, and not ours.
 - ii) God has a purpose for Joseph's life. The new events began with a set of nightmares by the Pharaoh. Joseph had no idea these dreams were taking place. He was busy rotting away in jail. The point is we never know what God is doing with other people that will affect our lives tomorrow.
5. Verse 1, second sentence: When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ² when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³ After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴ And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.
- a) Ok, a dream like that would wake me up too! Here we have a dream of seven fat (healthy) cows grazing by the Nile River. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile River as a source of life. Then seven skinny cows ate the seven healthy cows.
 - b) It's not necessary to discuss the meaning, because Joseph will do that in a few verses.
 - i) You would be amazed at some commentaries that give "secret meanings" to these dreams. Sometimes in a bible study, all you have to do is read what the text says, and nothing more!
 - c) Consider this: Cows are not carnivorous (meat eaters). Therefore, a dream of cows eating other cows is not to be taken literally, but has some sort of symbolic meaning.
6. Verse 5: He (Pharaoh) fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶ After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted--thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.
- a) Here we read of Pharaoh having a bad night. Pharaoh had a second, similar dream. Instead of cows, we have seven "unhealthy" grains of wheat eating seven "healthy" grains. Again, discussing what the dreams mean is not necessary because Joseph is going to do this in a few verses.
 - b) It is interesting to stop and consider this Pharaoh character didn't exist in the story until now. We've been reading for chapters about Joseph and all of his suffering.
 - i) The next think we read about is the head guy of the country where Joseph is confined having a bad dream.
 - ii) This is something to contemplate the next time you feel like you're praying and you're not getting any answers. You may think, "I'm stuck here in this situation and God's not doing anything about it."
 - iii) You may not realize God is giving, oh say, the President of the United States nightmares about cows that are going to affect your life! ☺

- iv) He may be doing something with your boss, your spouse, or your parents that is going to have a major affect on your life.
 - v) My point is to “not give up” on God just because you don’t see the results at hand. Remember Joseph had no idea all of this was going on.
7. Verse 8: In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.
- a) Let me paraphrase Pharaoh. “Ok, I’m a mystical kind of king. I know these dreams mean something. After all, I am a king. One of my Egyptian gods must be trying to send me some sort of message. On my payroll I have a whole bunch of religious guys who study dreams and can interpret them for me. It’s time to make them earn their pay and tell me what I’ve dreamed”.
 - b) For those who know their bible well, you can’t help but notice the similarity between this story and Daniel Chapter 2.
 - i) In Daniel Chapter 2, he was in captivity in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonian had a bad dream. He, like Pharaoh, called in the “magicians and wise men” to interpret it and no luck. Next he called in Daniel. Daniel’s job was more difficult than Joseph’s because Nebuchadnezzar did not tell Daniel the dream.
 - ii) Daniel had to validate the dream was from God because the dream was not revealed to him. One of the key points of that dream was Daniel gave God all the credit for the correct interpretation, as Joseph will do in a few verses.
 - c) One wonders why Pharaoh’s own men couldn’t interpret the dream.
 - i) You wonder if they gave some off the wall and interpretations and Pharaoh said, “Nah, that can’t be it, NEXT!”
 - ii) Maybe they were too scared to give Pharaoh a possible bad interpretation because if they were wrong, it would cost them their lives.
 - iii) What is true is that this was one of those moments in history where the true God of the Universe has a moment to show that He is greater than all false gods.
 - iv) However it happened, the point is, the false gods where “silenced”.
8. Verse 9: Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹ Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ¹² Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. ¹³ And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged. "
- a) The cupbearer, all of a sudden, had boldness. After two years of keeping his mouth shut, he finally tells the Pharaoh, “Oh yeah, hey Pharaoh, did I happen to mention there was this slave in prison who correctly interpreted my dreams?” ☺
 - b) Remember the cupbearer’s job was to make sure there was no poison in Pharaoh’s drinks. He didn’t work in the dream-interpretation department of the Egyptian government. ☺
 - i) I can just visualize a scene where Pharaoh stands in front of his entire staff and say something like, “Fine bunch of guys you are. You claim to have all of these mystical powers and when I really need you, nothing!” I can see the cupbearer, somewhere in the middle or the back of this meeting, and thinking, “You know, maybe I should say something about that Joseph fellow”.
 - ii) For the cupbearer to take the time and trouble to say something took guts. He didn’t know how the Pharaoh would react to his suggestion. It may have cost the cupbearer his life to even speak up like this. Again, it is another sign of God working in the background in ways we don’t know will affect us.

9. Verse 14: So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.
- a) Think about this from Joseph's standpoint.
 - i) Here he was living in prison, as if it was just another day.
 - ii) He probably smelled from being in prison. I visualize Joseph whistling away, going about his daily chores.
 - iii) All of a sudden, some top guards, come in, grab him, shower him off and rush him over to Pharaoh. I visualize them not explaining to Joseph what was about to happen. I picture the guards washing Joseph up, shaving him and throwing him down in front of Pharaoh without an explanation.
 - iv) Going back to Daniel Chapter 2, at least Daniel had some "warning time" to prepare for dream interpretation. When Daniel was told about the dream he had to interpret, you get the impression Daniel had a night to pray to God about giving him an answer.
 - a) Now Joseph had an advantage over Daniel in that Joseph was told what the dream was. Joseph didn't have the time to stop and pray for answers. I visualize Joseph rushed into the room as soon as possible.
10. Verse 15: Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."
- a) Notice what Joseph did not say:
 - i) "Yes I have the power to interpret dreams. That will be twenty shekels." ☺
 - ii) "Yes I can interpret the dreams, but first, let's talk about getting out of jail." ☺
 - iii) "Yes I have the power to interpret dreams. God gave me this power and I'm pretty special because I have this power". ☺
 - b) My point is to notice Joseph's humility and the fact He gave God all the credit. Joseph bluntly stated that he cannot interpret dreams, but only God can.
 - i) Remember Joseph has been living in Egypt for over 10 years now.
 - ii) Notice that Egypt hasn't "rubbed off" on Joseph. Despite living in a pagan oriented society like Egypt for many years, despite being a slave and a prisoner, Joseph still stands up for the true God. Joseph didn't "suck up" to the Pharaoh in order to be released. He stood up for God despite the circumstances.
 - c) The next verse coming up starts with the Pharaoh explaining the dream.
 - i) There is no comment by the Pharaoh saying, "ooh, that's interesting, tell me more about this God of yours".
 - ii) It's almost as if the Pharaoh is thinking, "Yeah, you, your God, whatever. Here's the dream kid, let's see what you can do with it".
 - iii) Sometimes, when we are being a public witness for God, it won't "sink in" until the other person can get past their problems. The Pharaoh is still upset about the dream. It's almost as if he is thinking, "Look, we can talk about religion later, first help me figure out what the dream means!"
 - a) This is a reminder of the classical expression, "People don't care what you know until they know that you care".
 - b) It may "sink in" to Pharaoh later about Joseph's God, but first Joseph needed to "minister" to Pharaoh about his problems before he can be of any further witness.

11. Verse 17: "Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸ when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹ After them, seven other cows came up--scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹ But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up."
- a) These verses are almost verbatim of what was said earlier in the chapter.
 - b) The first question to ponder is, "why was the text repeated? Why waste the ink?"
 - i) A clue is to look at the subtle differences.
 - a) In Verse 3, the skinny cows are described as "ugly and gaunt".
 - b) In Verse 19, it says the cows are "scrawny and very ugly and lean".
 - (1) It is as if the cows got worse in 16 verses. ☺
 - c) Pharaoh goes on to say in Verse 19, "I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt."
 - d) In Verse 21, Pharaoh commented in effect that even after the skinny cows ate the fat ones, they didn't gain any weight. (As someone who fights weight gain all my life, I hate people who can eat anything and not gain a pound! I can relate to Pharaoh here. ☺)
 - e) The main point is that Pharaoh understood that the bad cows represented something horrible. For that reason, he needed to know its meaning.
12. Verse 22, Pharaoh continues: "In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. ²³ After them, seven other heads sprouted--withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me."
- a) Again, the difference between the first and second time this dream is listed is the emphasis on "how bad" the second group is in comparison to the first group.
 - b) Again, an explanation of the dreams is not necessary by me or any other bible commentator because Joseph himself explains it starting in the next verse.
13. Verse 25: Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷ The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.
- a) Notice Joseph again, emphasizes the fact that God has revealed this to Pharaoh and not Joseph himself in Verse 25.
 - b) Joseph gets to the main point. The seven "good" cows and grains represent seven good economic years. The seven "bad" cows and grains represent seven years of famine.
14. Verse 28, Joseph continues: "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹ Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, ³⁰ but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. ³¹ The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³² The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.
- a) What "gets me" about Joseph is his boldness to tell the truth despite the consequences.
 - i) He told the truth about his prophetic dream to his brothers. That dream got Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers.
 - ii) He told the truth about the dreams to the baker and the butler. Despite Joseph's "plug" for freedom after the correct interpretation, Joseph didn't get out of jail for two more years.

- iii) Telling a king bad news can cost you your life. There was no guarantee the Pharaoh was going to believe Joseph, nor spare his life. Some people only want to hear good news and they ignore (or worse) anyone who tells them otherwise.
 - b) Remember the Pharaoh's commentary on the dream was how "bad" the skinny cows appeared and thin-wheat appeared. It is as if Pharaoh "couldn't remember" the good cows because the ugly cows were, well, so ugly.
 - i) Joseph emphasizes the famine will be so severe, the "good years" will be forgotten in the same way the "ugly" cows made Pharaoh forget the "good" cows.
 - c) Verse 32 maybe the most interesting of the bunch. Let me state it: "The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon."
 - i) There is a principal in the bible that "truth" requires two witnesses. In the Mosaic Law, in order to convict someone of a crime, there must be two witnesses in agreement to what happened. You cannot convict someone based on the testimony of just one person. (Ref.: Deuteronomy 17:6)
 - ii) A similar principal in the bible is "when something is stated twice, it is to emphasize its importance as a definite fact. When the bible states something twice in a short period of time, it is to say in effect, "this is true and it's going to happen, you can count on it."
 - a) It would be like us saying, "this food is very very good" is similar to God saying, "this is good food, this is good food". You get the idea.
 - b) There were two separate dreams. Both have the same meaning. Joseph stated the dreams were repeated twice for emphasis and the fact that this will happen soon.
 - c) Some suggest the fact that the dream was listed twice in this chapter is simply another emphasis of "double-dream, one interpretation".
15. Verse 33: "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. ³⁵ They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. ³⁶ This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."
- a) I am pretty positive that when Joseph suggested this idea, he was not thinking about himself. A lot of years as a slave and being in prison would give one a lack of self-confidence about ever being the #2 man in all of Egypt.
 - b) Joseph blurted out a solution: In effect he said, "Let's raise taxes during the seven good years. We'll put the extra food in storage and use it during the seven rough years".
 - c) This is "Joseph the administrator" coming out.
 - i) When Joseph was first sold as a slave, he rose to the head of the household. Joseph had a gift of "administration" and was promoted to chief of staff.
 - ii) When Joseph was in prison, he was eventually promoted to "chief prisoner" again, due to his administrative abilities.
 - iii) All of those years "paid off" for Joseph. It was "second nature" for Joseph to suggest how Pharaoh should deal with the seven good years and seven bad years.
 - iv) Notice the text does not say, "Here is how God wants you to deal with the seven good years and seven bad years". Don't get me wrong. I am sure Joseph's gift to be a good manager was God inspired. I'm sure Joseph gave God the credit for it.
 - a) My point is God often works best in our life in what we "think" are our "natural abilities". Joseph blurted out this plan Pharaoh because "that is what Joseph does". When God gives you a gift, he expects you to use it.

- v) Notice what Joseph did not do and say:
 - a) "Well, Pharaoh, there's the dream. God luck with the famine!" ☺
 - b) "Well Pharaoh, there's the dream. Can I get out of jail now?" ☺
 - c) My point is despite being sold into slavery, despite being falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and being in jail, Joseph served a pagan king.
 - d) This is not about glorifying Pharaoh. This is about being a good witness for God in all situations in life. We serve God by serving others.
16. Verse 37: The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. ³⁸ So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"
- a) First of all, notice Pharaoh and his officers believed Joseph and acted upon it.
 - i) They didn't say, "Hmm... interesting interpretation... Let's see if comes true".
 - b) This is an example of God working in the background of the lives of those around us.
 - c) This is the first time we read of anyone saying the "Spirit of God" is upon a man.
 - i) There was no mention of God's spirit (a.k.a, "Holy Spirit") ever being upon Adam, Noah, Abraham, etc. It is not that they weren't there, but it was never stated in the text until now.
 - d) Remember that the Egyptians believed in a whole multitude of gods.
 - i) There is an Egyptian concept of a "supreme being", but He is not interactive in the Egyptian lives the way their other "gods" are.
 - ii) For Pharaoh to make the comment about the "Spirit of (the) God" working in the life of Joseph is an amazing statement within itself.
 - iii) It is interesting to note that the first public testimony of how the Spirit of God is working in a man came from a pagan king.
 - iv) Personally, I think we're going to meet this Pharaoh in heaven one day. Salvation for a non-Jew of this era is based on how you act with the knowledge you are given about the true God. Here was Pharaoh acknowledging the existence of God and saying his "Spirit" was working in Joseph. I don't think Pharaoh understood the theological meaning of his statement, but all he knew is that "Joseph worshipped the true God and the true God was working in Him."
 - a) That should be a model for us. The world around us doesn't have to have a full understanding of Christian theology on "day one". It begins with "Hey, that guy over there worships God and I can see God working in his life". That's a great start down the right path.
17. Verse 39: Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."
- a) This is the day of Joseph's big promotion.
 - i) I'm guessing this was a major shock to Joseph as it was to anyone else.
 - b) I've seen a few promotions in my day. I've never heard of one going from being a slave to being the #2 man in a country where you are not from. I doubt that's been repeated in history, other than the parallels to the story of Daniel.
18. Verse 41: So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.
- a) Now we have the big moment. Pharaoh took a prisoner, a slave from a different country than Egypt, and made him the #2 man in all of the land. Pharaoh knew nothing of this man's background, his intents or his loyalty. Joseph's action in front of the Pharaoh was enough to convince him that he is trustworthy enough to be in charge.

- i) The same way Joseph earned Potiphar's trust a few chapters, back, the same way Joseph's earned the jail keeper's trust a few chapters back is the same way Joseph earned the Pharaoh's trust. How is that you say? ☺
 - a) Joseph was "God-focused" instead of "me-focused". Joseph lived his life based upon the fear of God in that he was primarily concerned with what God thought of his moment-by-moment life as opposed to doing what Joseph wanted to do.
 - b) If we can learn to live our lives constantly focused upon God watching us and living to please him, that attitude becomes visible to others.
 - c) Others can then trust us because we aren't "looking out for ourselves", but we are constantly focused upon doing what was right. That makes us trustworthy, be it as a slave, a prisoner, or a top government administrator.
 - b) Several lessons back, when I first started to talk about Joseph, I said the one word I would associate with Joseph is the word "redemption".
 - i) It is through Joseph that the "insignificant" family of Abraham's grandson Jacob gets to go to Egypt to form the nation of Israel.
 - ii) Joseph is a foreshadow of the "redemption" of the nation of Israel.
 - iii) Let's face it, God could have used many methods to get Jacob's family into Egypt. God could have had an angel tell Jacob, "Go live in Egypt until I say otherwise" and Jacob probably would have obeyed.
 - a) Instead, we have this whole story of one of Jacob's sons becoming the top guy in Egypt, and then we'll read of a famine that leads to Joseph's brothers to go visit him.
 - iv) Don't lose sight of the "big purpose" of this story and that is God used Joseph to bring redemption to Jacob's family. Yes there are lots of little lessons along the way, and this story is prophetic of Jesus in many ways.
 - v) Remember that the Book of Genesis is a book of "Beginnings". One of the big "beginnings" is the biblical concept of redemption.
19. Verse 44: Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." ⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.
- a) In Verse 44, we learn of the relationship between Pharaoh and Joseph.
 - i) Essentially, Pharaoh said, "I have put you in charge of all things. You only are accountable to me and everyone else in the land is accountable to you.
 - ii) The word picture here is similar to that of God the Father and Jesus:
 - a) "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him."
(John 5:22-23 NIV)
 - b) In Verse 45, Joseph was given a new Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife.
 - i) Again, consider the fact that Joseph now lived in Egypt for over a decade, in the most formidable (influential) years of his life. He was surrounded by Egyptian culture and Egyptian gods. He was now given a new Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife.
 - ii) Joseph was surrounded by "Egypt", but Joseph never let "Egypt" influence him. In fact, in Verse 18 of the next chapter, Joseph will proclaim to his brothers, "I fear God", which is a specific reference to THE God, as opposed to one of a multitude of Egyptian Gods.

- c) Notice that Joseph's new wife is the daughter of "Potiphera", which is the female-form of the word "Potiphar".
 - i) I'm not saying that Joseph's new wife is related to Potiphar, but the "pun" is there for a purpose.
 - ii) Joseph resisted the temptation of Potiphar's wife, and here, God rewards Joseph with a new wife that is the daughter of "Potiphera". I'm speculating that the pun is intentional.
20. Verse 46: Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸ Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹ Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.
- a) Verse 46 says Joseph was 30 years old when he became the #2 guy in Egypt.
 - i) Joseph was 17 when he was taken into slavery. (Reference Genesis 37:2).
 - ii) My point is when you are going through a 13-year "hell" period that seems like forever, one does not know why God is putting you through such a plan. During those long, rough periods, remember Joseph and the outcome.
 - b) The bible does not have a lot of references to individual ages as key points in the lives of biblical characters.
 - i) Moses got it a few times, and the kings of Israel often mention how long they lived. But it is rare when it says, "At this age, here is what happened..."
 - a) The bible mentions that both Saul and David were 30 years old when they became king. (Reference: 1st Samuel 13:1, 2nd Samuel 5:4)
 - b) The bible also teaches that a Levite began his priestly ministry when he was thirty years old. (Numbers 4:3)
 - c) There appears to be a biblical principal of one's ministry, as a general rule begins when one is 30 years old.
 - ii) Here we read of Joseph starting his "new job" at age 30. Note the following:
 - a) "Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry." (Luke 3:23a NIV) Coincidence? I doubt it. ☺
 - c) Getting back to the text, here we read of Joseph storing up the grain from the "seven good years". Remember that Joseph said everyone should be taxed 20% (Verse 34). That 20% was stored up in all the Egyptian cities to the point where you couldn't count it all.
 - i) There is a danger in life to not see beyond what is in your savings account. Things were "so good", they couldn't even count it all (Verse 49). I'm sure the local Egyptians figured they were safe for a long time.
 - ii) The point is one never knows what is "around the next bend". The seven "bad" years is going to make everyone forget the seven good years.
 - iii) Another point to learn from this is that God is not "anti-planning". Unfortunately I have met Christians who don't plan for their future because they mistakenly think, "God will take care of me, and therefore I don't have to plan!
 - a) Notice how Joseph, who is filled with God's spirit, planned for the future. We don't read of God telling Joseph to do this 20% tax and store plan. It is something Joseph did based on his God-given talents as an administrator.
 - b) My point is plan for the future as if you don't know what God is going to do. Use your talents and biblical wisdom and plan accordingly. If God changes those plans, so be it. Adjust your plans as situations change.

21. Verse 50: Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphara, priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."
- a) Here we read of Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.
 - i) Later, these two sons will be "adopted" by Joseph's father Jacob, and they become part of the 12 tribes of Israel. More on this when it happens later in Genesis.
 - b) The application of these sentences come from the meaning of the two sons name:
 - i) The word "Manasseh" means, "forget", as implied in Verse 51.
 - ii) The word "Ephraim" means "fruitful" as implied in Verse 52.
 - iii) Remember that the bible likes to work in puns. For example, the word "Manasseh" literally means, "forget", because having this son made Joseph forget about all of the troubles of slavery and time in jail.
 - iv) Any parent will tell you that having a child changes your perspective and outlook on life. It makes you focus on the children's needs over your needs. Who was time to wallow in past grief when a baby needs a bottle at 3am? ☺ All joking aside, the joy of children can make you, at lease for a time, forget your past grief.
 - v) The important part is to consider the meaning of the two sons' names together: The two sons names mean "forget" and "fruitful".
 - a) A synonym of "forget" is to "forgive"
 - b) A synonym of "fruitful" as used here, is to have "blessing" on one's life.
 - c) I will argue that God cannot bless our lives until we first ask for forgiveness for our sins. That is "Step 1" in the Christian walk to maturity.
 - d) Further, until we let go of our anger at others, until we "get over it" and now wallow in our past suffering, we cannot be blessed by God.
 - e) Anger and hurt block our relationship with God. Yes that pain is real, and yes that pain has long-term consequences. If we want peace with God, we have to "let go" of the pain and "forget" it. This is where forgiveness comes into play. It is hard to forgive someone who hasn't asked for it. It is not about letting the guilty go free. God desires justice too. This is about having internal peace and not letting past "hurts" eat away our lives.
22. Verse 53: The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵ When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you."
- a) The seven "bad" years were now beginning. Notice the famine was not just an Egyptian problem, but the agricultural famine also hit the surrounding nations as well, as stated in Verse 54.
 - b) Notice Pharaoh is a "hands off" type of leader. He says in effect, "Don't bug me. Go talk to Joseph and whatever he says, goes, end of issue".
23. Verse 56: When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.
- a) Something in Verse 56 gets me. It says Joseph sold grain to the Egyptians.
 - i) Now if I was a good tax paying Egyptian, I'd be a little peeved right now. ☺
 - a) I can see an Egyptian farmer saying, "For seven years, I've been paying my 20% grain tax to Pharaoh. Now that I need the government to bail me out, of this famine, I have to buy that grain I stuck in there?"
 - b) I'm surprised there wasn't a revolt over this.
 - c) Remember the other "Golden Rule": He who has the gold rules.
 - d) Joseph is saying in effect, "Look, I've got the grain, my armies are guarding it. You'll get killed if you steal it. Now you have to pay me to have some.

- ii) Historically, what this did is make Egypt the most powerful nation on earth for many many centuries. After the seven years of famine, the Egyptians and all the surrounding nations paid whatever they had to Pharaoh in exchange for grain. This caused Pharaoh and the Egyptian government to become very wealthy. I suspect the great dynasties of Egypt owe a lot of gratitude to Joseph and this requirement of purchasing the grain.
 - b) One has to see another word-picture here: It is Joseph as the redeemer.
 - i) Redemption must be purchased from God. Joseph set up this “buy-back” program as a model of Jesus Christ as our redeemer.
 - ii) The purchase price is “all that we are and all that we own”. Over the next seven years, the Egyptian would give all they have to Pharaoh through Joseph in order to have “life”.
 - iii) In one sense, redemption for a Christian is “free” because Jesus paid it all.
 - iv) In another sense, it cost us everything we own and are, as to be a follower of Jesus we must be willing to give our lives for him as he gave his life for us.
 - a) Jesus said, “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:39 NIV)
 - v) The good news is that when we “give it all”, God gives it all back to us and more so. We inherit a full, rich abundant life in God now, and for eternity. Once you’ve “crossed that line” and live for God, it’s hard to fathom wanting to go back.
 - a) Jesus says to nonbelievers: “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. (Revelation 3:18 NIV)”
24. Verse 57: And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.
- a) Notice the model of Joseph as the redeemer isn’t just to the Egyptians, it isn’t just to Joseph’s brothers as well read in Chapter 42, but it is to “the whole world”.
 - i) Joseph is a model of a redeemer to the world.
 - ii) The word picture is that those who refused to come to Joseph would die of starvation. Those who would come to Joseph for redemption got “life”.
 - iii) The world’s dependence for life is now in Joseph’s hands.
 - iv) The only one “above” Joseph is Pharaoh. Pharaoh put all his trust into Joseph to redeem anyone willing to come to him.
 - v) If that isn’t a wonderful model of “Father and Son”, I don’t know what is.
 - vi) Further, remember that Pharaoh said the “Spirit of God” is upon Joseph. That is not said of anyone else in Genesis. Gee, I don’t want to upset my Jewish readers, but this looks a lot like the “Trinity” in focus in these verses. ☺
25. In the next couple of chapters, we are going to have Joseph specifically dealing with his brothers.
- a) Like the “word-pictures” of this chapter, the next set of chapters also deal with redemption. The specific word-pictures of the next set of chapters will be more focused on God’s relationship with the Nation of Israel.
 - b) Before we can discuss God’s relationship with Israel, it is first essential to discuss God’s relationship with the world-as-a-whole on the topic of redemption. That is what we have here. We have Joseph saying to the world “Hey, I know its tough out there. I know there is a famine going on. God told me in advance about the famine and it is there for a purpose. Come to me and buy from me. (Again, See Revelation 3:18, the last comment before starting Verse 57)). I’ll take care of you through the famine and you will have life.

- i) Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
(John 10:10b, NIV)
 - ii) The Gospel writer John made this comment about his Gospel near the end of his book: "But these (stories) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."
(John 20:31 NIV)
 - iii) Life "begins" when you put your trust in Jesus. Back here in Genesis, the "world" will have life when they put their trust in Joseph. Joseph is calling out to the world to come "buy" life from me just as Jesus did about two thousand years later.
26. Well, while I'm on a roll, this is a good time to close in prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the redemption you have provided for us through Jesus Christ. Thousands of years before Jesus came to earth, you gave us predictions and word-pictures that point to this redemption. Help us to comprehend and apply these word pictures to our lives so that we may serve you better. Help us to serve others like Joseph living a God-centered life and using your power to be a witness to others. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.