

Genesis Chapter 42-43 – John Karmelich

1. There is a cute riddle that goes as follows: What is the definition of “minor” surgery?
 - a) The answer is surgery on someone other than yourself. ☺
 - b) When you’re set to have a routine operation, there is no such thing as a “routine operation” or “minor surgery”. When it is you about to go under the knife, it is difficult, scary and important, no matter what anyone else tells you.
 - c) The surgery is usually needed. It may be the best thing for you. But it doesn’t stop you from worrying about it. Further, there is often pain prior to the surgery, which is why you need it in the first place. There is often pain right afterwards, as your body recovers.
 - d) In a lot of ways, life is like that surgery. Visualize God as a surgeon saying:
 - i) “Yes, this is going to hurt. I’m going to do this to you to make you better. It may hurt for awhile afterwards, but it is the best thing for you. Yes are going to have pain prior to the surgery itself, but my job is to make you better.
2. I open with this riddle because this section of Genesis is about testing and trials.
 - a) This is not about surgery, but we are going to deal with pain. That pain is due the affects of worrying about the situation at hand. God is working in the background of this section “making people better”.
 - i) Joseph for all intents and purposes, is through with his suffering.
 - ii) He is now the #2 man in Egypt.
 - b) These two chapters’ focus on Joseph’s brothers. It is their turn. The brothers don’t have to go through all the years of slavery and prison, but they don’t get off for free either.
 - c) The word “prison” usually refers to a physical location. The word slave is a literal state for many humans. In today’s world, we often use “prison” and “slave” to describe a mental state of mind. When you are trapped with hurts, worries, etc., it is often described as being in “prison” or a “slave” to some action.
 - i) These two chapters are about being set free. Joseph was through his trials. His brothers would not have to experience Joseph’s level of slavery and jail, but they still had the “mental jail” and “mental” slavery. They still had the guilt of what they did to Joseph many years ago. These two chapters focus on the brothers being mentally “set free”. It is about their mental maturity.
 - ii) The personal application of this chapter is not just to read the story of Joseph and his brothers, but it is see how God is working in our lives. God is working in the background trying to set you free of your own imprisonment and slavery. It is about realizing your past sins and mistakes, confessing them and “getting on” with your life in a better relationship with God.
 - iii) That is what we are going to read about with Joseph’s brothers in Chapters 42-43.
 - iv) It has been about 13 years since they first sold Joseph into slavery.
 - v) They have been carrying that guilt around all this time, as it will be evident in these chapters. Joseph may have been set free from prison, but mentally, the brothers are still in prison. Joseph was called to set them free.
3. What I want you to see through these chapters is the method and tests that Joseph’s brothers, and their father Jacob go through.
 - a) Let’s face it, Joseph was the #2 man in Egypt. He could have simply sent an army to go find his family, reveal who he was and they all live happily ever after in Egypt.
 - b) Joseph’s brothers don’t know who Joseph is, until that fact is revealed in Chapter 44.
 - c) In these two chapters, we are going to read of the trials and suffering Joseph’s brother and their father go through.

- d) Which leads back to my favorite question about Genesis, which is the “why” question.
- i) Why go to all of this trouble?
 - ii) Why does Joseph accuse his brothers of being spies and put them in prison? Why did God allow a large famine to occur just to get Joseph’s brothers to see Joseph?
 - iii) The “big-picture” idea is that God tests us. What is difficult for us to see is that all the events of our lives are “God-filtered”. Living day by day makes it difficult for us to see the big picture. All of the “coincidences”, trials and tests we read about are all for the purpose of testing the faith of Joseph’s brothers.
 - iv) If Joseph had simply revealed who he was to his brothers on “Day 1”, his brothers never would have matured in their faith toward God. Joseph would never know if they had changed, or they were “the same old brothers”.
 - a) So why did Joseph test his brothers? Revenge?
 - (1) If that were true, Joseph could have just thrown them in prison and say, “I’ll see in a few years like I had to suffer”.
 - (2) The text does not say why Joseph wanted to test them.
 - (3) Maybe he just wanted to see if they had changed. Maybe he just wanted to see if they felt any remorse for their crimes.
 - v) This is a question I’m going to come back to at the end of this lesson. I believe the answer is, “If God wants us to have a relationship with him, it has to be on God’s terms”. If Joseph, who is the second most powerful man alive (representing Jesus in this word-picture), wants us as Christians to be “a family again”, then their first has to come testing and confession, to free us of our sins. That way we can have that peaceful relationship that God desires that we have with him.
 - a) What you do see through the next two chapters is the softening of Joseph as he realized his brothers had truly repented of their sins.
 - b) I take the view that once Joseph realized they not only felt guilt for their past sins, but actually repented (a desire to change for the better), Joseph forgave them of their sins the same way God forgives us when we simply ask for forgiveness and at the same time, truly desire to change for the better and act upon that.
4. Before I jump into the text, the other “big-picture” idea to get is some of the prophetic (“word-picture” ideas tied to Jesus. We’ll tackle some of those as we go.
- a) Joseph’s brothers and their father, collectively represent the nation of Israel as all of the brothers form the “12 tribes” of Israel.
 - b) It is an interesting word-picture that the “first time” they saw Joseph, they didn’t recognize him. On the “second time”, they still didn’t recognize Joseph, and Joseph revealed who he was to them. What does that mean prophetically?
 - c) Many Evangelical Christians see this as a prophecy between Jesus and the Nation of Israel. On Jesus’ “first trip” the nation of Israel collectively didn’t recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus knew he was going to be rejected, but still reached out and ministered to the same people who would reject him. (Compare this to the word picture of Joseph “feeding for free” his family in this chapter, despite the fact they didn’t recognize him!
 - d) When you read Stephen’s speech in Acts Chapter 7, Stephen picks up on this fact as a word-picture of Israel’s failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 7:13)
 - e) I personally take the view that when Jesus comes back, the nation of Israel, corporately will realize their error and see Jesus as the Messiah. In that sense, Joseph is a “word-picture” of Jesus who will reveal himself to the Nation of Israel on his Second Coming.
 - a) They (Israel) will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. (Zechariah 12:10b NIV)

5. Genesis 42, Verse 1: When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" ² He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."
- a) To summarize these verses: Jacob and his sons needed food. They knew that Egypt had food to sell. Jacob is telling his sons to stop moping around and go to Egypt to buy food.
 - b) To understand these first 2 verses, we need to back up to the last 2 verses of Chapter 41:
 - i) 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. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world. (Genesis 41:56-57, NIV)
 - ii) Visualize Joseph being in charge of selling grain. I picture foreign dignitaries coming to him with money and livestock in hand. Joseph had to be on his guard against spies and thieves. When your country has lots of "stuff" and others don't, there is always the fear of being attacked.
 - iii) You had to wonder if Joseph thought, "I wonder what ever happened to my brothers and my father? I wonder if they will ever show up in this line one day?"
 - c) With all of that in mind, Jacob is telling his 11 sons (Jacob is in Egypt), "Hey, why are all of you sitting there moping around? We're out of food. There is food in the neighboring country of Egypt. We're going to starve if we don't get some. Get moving".
 - i) The text specifically says, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?"
 - a) Jacob wanted his sons (they were in their 30's) to go to Egypt.
 - b) The brothers are thinking, "We can't go to Egypt. We sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. We might see him there. We can't handle the guilt".
 - (1) Guilt is something you want to bury. That is what the brothers were facing here. Just being in Egypt would surface that guilt.
 - c) How do I know the brothers were thinking this? The answer is to read this chapter. When Joseph accuses the brothers of being spies, their first instinctive answer is "It is because of what we did to Joseph". (Verse 21).
 - ii) God wants us to have a relationship with him. Guilt blocks that relationship. God is putting the brothers through this trial to deal with that guilt. My point is to be aware of the trials and tests we go through have a purpose.
6. Verse 3: Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. ⁵ So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.
- a) Notice that Jacob is called "Jacob" in Verse 4, and Jacob is called "Israel" in Verse 5.
 - i) In this chapter, we get back to Joseph's father Jacob.
 - ii) We haven't read about Jacob in seven chapters.
 - iii) Remember that God renamed Jacob "Israel". Yet the Book of Genesis seems to go "back and forth" between calling him Jacob and calling him "Israel".
 - a) Most commentators believe there is a clue to the story based on which name Jacob or Israel is being used at that moment.
 - b) Jacob means (among other things), "conniver". The concept is that when Jacob is not doing God's will, but trying to survive on his own wits, the bible uses the name "Jacob". The name Israel means, "struggle with God". When that title is used, Jacob is usually attempting to do God's will.
 - c) In summary, be aware of when "Jacob" and "Israel" are being used in the chapters after God renames him. It is usually a clue to whether or not Jacob/Israel is currently doing God's will.

- b) In Verse 4, "Jacob" tells 10 of his sons that "I'm keeping my youngest son Benjamin back here, because I don't trust you. In Verse 5, "Israel's sons go to buy grain.
- i) I'm going to argue, by that fact alone, it was God's intention that all of the sons go to Egypt to buy grain.
 - ii) Jacob's name implies "I'll do it my way and not God's way". It was not God's will for Benjamin to stay home.
 - iii) It was God's will for all the sons to go. Thus we read of "Israel's sons" going to buy grain. God's intention was to get the family down to Egypt for about 400 years and start the whole "Exodus" process.
 - iv) Which leads back to the question of "How do we know something is God's will or not? A good clue is whether or not a project is successful or a failure. If we "try something", and it is a dismal failure, God wants us to learn from that process and try something else. The brothers' first trip to Egypt for all intents and purposes, was a dismal failure. It was on the "second trip" that the family was blessed beyond comprehension.
7. Verse 6: Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.⁷ As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."
- a) Here was Joseph watching over those who bought and sold grain.
 - i) I visualize more than one location for grain sales. The grain was probably stored in different places throughout Egypt. Joseph was in charge of the guys who sold the food. I'm guessing that Joseph "happened" to be at the right location at the right time when his brothers showed up.
 - b) When Joseph first saw his brothers, his first reaction was harsh.
 - i) I'm speculating that years of pent up anger came out of Joseph at his brothers.
 - ii) Joseph at this point in his life, had "some" realization that God was behind his promotion, but still saw his brothers as at fault.
 - iii) Remember that Joseph will eventually forgive his brothers. The "climax" verse to this whole section on Joseph will come in the last chapter of Genesis when Joseph says, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20 NIV).
 - iv) In the meantime, Joseph is still harboring some anger at this point. Let's face it, these are the guys who sold Joseph into slavery and started his years of hardship. It would be "natural" for Joseph not to trust them to simply buy food.
 - v) The important thing to note is that God uses that anger to test Joseph's brothers.
 - vi) Remember that the main theme of this section of Genesis is about testing.
 - a) God is working on Joseph to test him and build his faith in God.
 - b) God wants Joseph to comprehend that He was behind all of this.
 - c) At the same time, God is also testing Joseph's brothers, to see if they have matured in their faith and their character.
 - d) These two chapters will show that the brothers have changed their ways. Joseph puts them through a number of tests to show that to be true.
8. Verse 8: Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.⁹ Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."
- a) These two verses are the ones I wrested with more than any other. Notice the text does not say, "Joseph remembered how his brothers sold him into slavery and then accused them of being spies."

- b) My question is “Why does the text say Joseph remembered the dream about all of his brothers bowing down to him and then Joseph accused them of being spies?”
 - c) I believe the answer is Joseph just got “God-focused” at this one moment. Joseph realized that dream he had as a child was from God and just came true.
 - d) Joseph calling his brothers spies was the first step in a series of tests for his brothers.
 - e) I believe God put that accusation into Joseph’s brain at that moment so as to test them.
 - f) Joseph remembered his brothers as being non-trustworthy. The kind of people who would sell their own brother into slavery can’t be trusted. Thus in Joseph’s mind, it may have been a fair accusation.
9. Verse 10: "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."
- a) Notice the phrase, “We are honest men”.
 - i) These are the guys who sold Joseph into slavery and lied about it to their father!
 - ii) I suspect Joseph rolled his eyes when he heard that one!
 - iii) This would also explain Joseph’s response in the next verse:
10. Verse 12: "No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected." ¹³ But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."
- a) Remember that the brothers did not recognize Joseph.
 - i) It has been roughly 20 years since they last seen him.
 - a) Joseph is wearing Egyptian “garb” and possibly Egyptian makeup.
 - b) The last thing the brothers could ever imagine is that this was Joseph.
 - b) Notice the brothers said at the end of Verse 13: “One is no more”.
 - i) They figured Joseph was dead. To them, Joseph no longer existed.
 - ii) I stated in my introduction that you can compare this whole story to Jesus and his relation to the Nation of Israel.
 - a) In Genesis the brothers made two trips to see Joseph.
 - b) On the first trip, Joseph “recognized them”, but not the other way around.
 - c) It is a picture of how Jesus is the Messiah, but is not recognized by the Jewish nation.
 - d) Notice the word picture of “Joseph is Dead”. In that sense, Joseph was “resurrected” in the next chapter because he became alive to them on their “second visit”. In the same way, I believe the Jewish nation will see Jesus alive again when he comes the second time.
11. Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! ¹⁵ And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" ¹⁷ And he put them all in custody for three days.
- a) Notice Joseph says, “This is how you will be tested”.
 - i) The brothers said, “We have one more brother at home with dad, and we’ve come to buy food for the group.” Joseph is responding with, “If your story is true, nine of the ten brothers can go to prison, while one of you goes and gets your younger brother. That way, I’ll know you are not lying”.
 - ii) Whether or not Joseph realized it or not, this was all part of God’s plan to get the whole family to Egypt.
 - b) Remember that the youngest brother is from the same mother Rachel, as Joseph.
 - i) Joseph has not seen Benjamin, since Benjamin was an infant.
 - ii) Joseph may have thought of this idea just to see his younger brother.

- c) OK, time to take a time out and let all of this sink in.
 - i) What we have a dialogue between Joseph and his brothers.
 - ii) All of this makes a nice story, but what does any of it have to do with my life?
 - a) First of all, it is a reminder of how God works in our life. Remember that Genesis does not record any direct revelations from God to Joseph. There is no "And God said to Joseph" anywhere in the bible. God mainly works through the circumstances of our lives. We may not realize moment by moment that God is working in the background but he is.
 - b) Second, this story reminds us, "No one in life gets away with anything".
 - (1) God did want Joseph in Egypt, and God allowed Joseph to be sold into slavery. That doesn't excuse the brother's actions. You can't excuse your sin just because it worked out for a greater purpose.
 - c) Third, notice how God works in our lives to reveal our sins.
 - (1) I seriously doubt that either Joseph or his brothers understood that this whole story benefited their individual relationships with God.
 - (2) With Joseph, he will understand how God is in control of the whole situation. With the brothers, God is working on getting them to confess their sins as to have a better relationship with Him. God's "tests" have a purpose in our lives, although we often can only see them in hindsight.
12. Verse 18: On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. ²⁰ But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.
- a) In Verse 18, Joseph reveals that he worships God. That would be the God we know. ☺
 - i) In Verses 15-16, Joseph "swears by the name of Pharaoh" to his brothers, but that is it. "Swearing by Pharaoh" was Joseph doing his job as food administrator.
 - ii) In Verse 18 Joseph will let all but one brother get out of prison, and at that point, Joseph mentions how he "fears God."
 - iii) As Joseph "lightens" the punishment on his brothers, it may be (speculation) that Joseph is getting more "God-focused" than "Pharaoh-focused".
 - b) From the Christian perspective, you can have a field day with the word picture of Joseph setting the brothers free on the "third day". Well, 'nuff said. ☺
 - c) Notice the brothers don't stop and ponder, "How does this guy know our God anyway?"
13. Verse 21: They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us."
- a) Notice the first thing Joseph's brothers due is to blame themselves for Joseph's "death".
 - i) Maybe it was subconscious. Let's face it, the #2 man in Egypt "resembled" the Joseph they knew and maybe that struck a nerve.
 - b) The point is the brothers were carrying around that guilt for many years.
 - i) I've heard stories of fugitives who have been on the run for years be grateful that they were finally caught. It alleviates the guilt they have been carried for years.
 - ii) Think about all the crimes committed where the criminal then turns around and kills themselves because they can't bear the thought of living with the guilt.
 - iii) I'm convinced one of man's greatest needs is to know they are forgiven of a sin.
 - a) Much of the bible is designed to teach us how we are forgiven if we are simply willing to confess that sin and be willing to change our lifestyle.
 - b) "Testing" by God is often a process of bringing sin "up to the surface" so we can confess it out of our system. That is the story we have here.

14. Verse 22: Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." ²³ They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.
- a) In Verse 22 Reuben is scolding his brothers. Back in Chapter 37, Reuben discouraged his brothers from trying to kill Joseph. The text also implies (Genesis 37:39) that Reuben was not around at the moment Joseph was sold into slavery.
 - b) Remember Reuben is the oldest and feels responsible. Here we are at least 13 years after Joseph was sold into slavery and they still feel guilty about it.
 - i) Guilt from a sin does not die with old age. It gets buried at times, but it comes out when you least expect it. Here were the brothers suffering in Egypt. Their first thought was, "this has something to do with the Joseph incident from 13 years ago." The guilty conscious was coming out.
 - c) In Verse 23, Joseph overheard all of this, but didn't let on that he heard.
 - i) Remember that Joseph is testing them. Joseph wanted to see if they have changed. Just because they felt guilt about the past, doesn't mean they've changed.
15. Verse 24: He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.
- a) Verse 24 mentions Joseph crying.
 - i) Was it because he missed them, despite all they did to him?
 - ii) Was it because Joseph saw they still felt guilty about what they did?
 - iii) My personal view is that Joseph knew this test was necessary. It was all part of God's plan to get the whole family to Egypt. Joseph's tears may have been "tears of joy" as Joseph saw his brothers realizing their guilt about what they did to him.
 - b) There are times when God mourns for us, but doesn't intervene. Don't assume that just because God is not interfering in your life, He doesn't care. Testing is necessary, and testing requires the "tester" to step back and see the results, despite the pain.
 - c) Most parents are aware of this. Sometimes you have to let your children suffer a little just to understand what they are going through. There are limits of what a parent should allow. In order to let a child mature, you give them responsibility and let them grow, and "see what happens". This is the case here with Joseph and his brothers.
 - d) Remember that all the brothers are in jail. On "Day 3", they all get let go, but Simeon is kept behind. A natural question is, why Simeon?
 - i) The text does not say. His name is not listed in the chapter where Joseph is sold into slavery. I suspect it was because Simeon was the second oldest. Reuben, the oldest was not around when Joseph was sold into slavery. Therefore, Simeon had to bear responsibility since he was the second oldest.
 - ii) Besides, if Reuben is the oldest, he needs to be the leader to go explain the whole situation to dad.
16. Verse 25: Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, ²⁶ they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.
- a) Joseph let all the brothers go home except Simeon. Joseph secretly put the brother's money back in the sack for the return trip.
 - b) Again, this is about testing. Joseph knew the famine was going to last seven years and they would return. Therefore, he was testing them to see if they would return the money.
 - c) The big question is, "Why was Joseph doing all of this? Why is this testing necessary?"
 - i) Was Joseph motivated by revenge? I don't think so. If that were the case, Joseph would have revealed who he was at the first encounter and just threw them in jail.

- ii) This is speculation, but I suspect Joseph wanted to see if their brothers “Feared God” the same way Joseph did. Before Joseph could reveal himself, he needed to know if they were “born again”, in the sense that they trusted in God and repented of their sins.
 - iii) It is best to explain this in “word-pictures”. God the Father wants the best for us and wants to bless us. Before God can bless us, we have to deal with the sin in our lives. God tests us so that we can be better people and we confess the sin to him. Often we have to be aware of our sin before we can confess it and move on.
 - iv) God allows us to go through tests to bring our problems to the “surface”. The concept is not to get rid of them through self-discipline, but to confess them to God so He can “take over” and clean us up, moment by moment.
17. Verse 27: At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"
- a) Remember that Joseph is not aware of the brother’s conversation in these verses.
 - b) Here in Verses 27-28, the brothers notice the money was back in the sack.
 - c) The important part is the first thought out of their mouth is “What is this that God has done to us?”
 - i) The bad news is that they are blaming God for their problems, and not themselves.
 - ii) The good news is that, at least they are “God-focused”, instead of “me-focused”.
 - iii) You know you’re on the right path to spiritual health when you are thinking that God is behind the actions.
 - d) One of the word-pictures you see in this section of Genesis is that the brothers cannot “buy” the grain. On both their first and second trips, their money was not accepted.
 - i) Some Christian commentators see this as a word picture reminder that you cannot “buy” salvation. Here are the leaders of what will be the 12 tribes of Israel, coming to the most powerful man on earth to “buy” life again. Their “money is no good”, although they don’t comprehend what is going on.
 - ii) Many see this as a comparison to those who are trying to “buy” their way into heaven by their good deeds. They are being blessed without giving money, but they still can’t comprehend how they can get “undeserved blessings” (i.e., grace!).
18. Verse 29: When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, ³⁰ "The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. ³¹ But we said to him, `We are honest men; we are not spies. ³² We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.' ³³ "Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, `This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. ³⁴ But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.' "
- a) This paragraph is the ten brothers repeating the events of the day to their father Jacob.
 - i) A pattern you pick up in Genesis is the “double mention” of key events. Genesis will commonly tell a story, and then repeat much of the key text a second time.
 - ii) There is no definite explanation for this. My first thought is “why waste the ink?”
 - iii) The reason is for emphasis. It is as if God is saying, “Here is the good part. I’m repeating it twice so you don’t miss it!”
 - b) The “good part” is the fact that all of this is orchestrated by God for the purpose of getting the whole family down to Egypt.

- c) Notice that twice in this paragraph, the brothers stated “we are honest men”.
 - i) I stated earlier I bet Joseph rolled his eyes at that one.
 - ii) I believe now their father Jacob also rolled his eyes at that one as well!
 - d) The main purpose of this whole section is to see their father’s Jacob reaction.
 - i) Even though Jacob is an old man, and the “sons” are now in their 30’s and 40’s with kids of their own, Jacob is still head of the tribe and makes all the major decisions. Thus, it is necessary to tell Jacob all of the events so he can make his decision. It is necessary to get Jacob’s “permission” to take Benjamin down on the second trip.
19. Verse 35: As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened.³⁶ Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!"
- a) I always laugh when I read father-Jacob’s reaction: “Everything is against me!”
 - i) This is the classic pity-party. There is no gratitude of the fact that they had grain. There is no gratitude that they got their money back. Joseph focuses on the negative aspects of the trip.
 - ii) This is why Jacob is called “Jacob” in this paragraph, and not “Israel”.
 - iii) It doesn’t dawn on Jacob that God can be behind it all.
 - iv) Jacob is focusing on the pain of the loss, and not considering the fact that this is all part of God’s plan.
 - b) It’s easy to chuckle at Jacob, knowing the results of the story. It’s much harder when it is you and I going through pain and not knowing the result.
 - c) The application to you and I here is that when “everything is going wrong” or “everything is going against me”, stop and pray. Here’s a good example:
 - i) “Lord, help me to learn the lesson you want me to learn from this. Give me (us) the strength and courage to face this situation. Give me the wisdom and discernment to understand the purpose of this situation. Help me to remember that you have a purpose for this. Again, let not this lesson be wasted”.
20. Verse 37: Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."³⁸ But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."
- a) Reuben, being the oldest and responsible, offers the “noble gesture” of saying, “Look dad, let me take Benjamin to Egypt so we can bail out Simeon. If I don’t come back, you can kill my two sons.”
 - b) It’s a noble gesture, but futile. Killing two grandkids if a son gets killed does not fix the problems. It is a sign that Reuben was willing to be responsible.
 - c) Jacob is saying in effect, “Look, my favorite wife is the late Rachel. She only had two kids. One is dead (in my mind) and the other is my favorite. I can’t afford to lose Benjamin.”
 - i) God often works best when we are willing to let go. It wasn’t until Jacob agreed to let Benjamin go in the next chapter is when Jacob is rewarded with the knowledge that both sons are alive.
21. Chap. 43, Vs. 1: Now the famine was still severe in the land.² So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food."
- a) I find this to be the most comical verse in these two chapters.
 - i) Remember that Simeon is sitting in a jail cell in Egypt. Notice that dad and the boys don’t rush to send Benjamin to Egypt. It is only after they have eaten all the grain that Jacob is going to agree to send Benjamin down to Egypt.
 - ii) It is as if to say, “I don’t want to lose Benjamin...I’ve already lost Joseph. But Simeon? Oh well, no big rush! ☺

- b) Notice that God has to starve Jacob and his sons before they agree to go back.
 - i) Sometimes God has to bring us to desperate levels before we are willing to cooperate and move on to the next step.
 - ii) Remember that this starvation was not necessary. The brothers could have gone back immediately with Benjamin, and then they wouldn't be starving.
 - iii) It was Jacob's refusal to "let go" of Benjamin that sunk them to this level.
 - iv) Notice there was no angel speaking to Jacob saying "It's ok, Jacob, let the kids go, I've got everything worked out". This is about God working in our lives."
 - a) It is as if God is saying, "OK Jacob... I won't force you to go, but I do want the best for you. Sit there and starve until you figure it out." ☺
 - b) God does not want us to starve. He does want us to "move on" in life and be obedient. Sometimes we have to get into dire straits before our old stubborn nature will cooperate.
22. Verse 3: But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'⁴ If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you.⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.' "
- a) Here is Judah reminding Jacob of the necessity of sending Benjamin along.
 - b) For those that like the word-pictures, here is Judah, part of the messianic line telling the father that in order for them to have "life", all the brothers must go to Egypt. (If this is confusing, hang in there. More on this later!)
23. Verse 6: Israel asked, "Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?"
- a) Notice that the text refers to Jacob as "Israel" in this verse.
 - i) I don't see Jacob/Israel doing God's will here. In fact, we see the old conniving Jacob saying in effect, "Why couldn't you lie a little about your brother?"
 - ii) The clue is that Jacob/Israel is about to go along with the plan and thus "God's will" is getting accomplished.
24. Verse 7: They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?' he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?' We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here?'"
- a) Notice how nobody in the family "got it".
 - i) None of them recognized Joseph and none of them saw the "big picture".
 - ii) That is how life often is. In hindsight, we can see God working through the situation. In the meantime, it is at best, simply confusing.
25. Verse 8: Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.⁹ I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.¹⁰ As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice."
- a) In these verses, Judah speaks up and takes responsibility for the life of Benjamin.
 - i) It was Judah who was the one who decided to sell Joseph into slavery. (Genesis 37:26-27). Now it appears Judah is "repenting" and trying to change his ways.
 - b) Let's get back to our "Judah-word pictures".
 - i) Judah is the one through whom the Messiah will come.
 - ii) Judah himself says, "let me be responsible for his safety".
 - iii) This is a word-picture of "Messianic line of Jesus" being responsible for the salvation of the Jewish family. This is a word-picture of the second trip bringing "salvation" to the 12 tribes of Israel.

- c) I'm a big believer, as most Evangelical Christians that God is not through with the nation of Israel. One of the purposes of the 7-year tribulation as described in the Book of Revelation is for God to "refocus" His attention on the Nation of Israel.
 - i) This has nothing to do with the faithfulness of the Jewish people, but on God's unconditional promises to that nation.
 - ii) That is why Paul says in Romans, of a future day, "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved". (Romans 11:25b-26a NIV).
 - iii) One can argue whether that means every single Jewish person who lives during that time, or it means that Israel "corporately" will accept Jesus. The point is that when Jesus comes the Second Time, it will be for the benefit of the Nation of Israel.
 - iv) Which leads us back to the "12 tribes", being lead by "Judah" to go back to Egypt and getting God's will done.

26. Verse 11: Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift--a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹² Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³ Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. ¹⁴ And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved."
- a) Here is "dad's plan". Take some of our emergency supplies and double the money you took before and go back to Egypt with Benjamin.
 - i) This is like a "flashback" for Jacob too. Remember many chapters ago, he was afraid to meet his brother Esau. He brought many presents to Esau ahead of him, hoping to appease his anger. Here is Jacob, in a sense, trying the same thing again, hoping it would appease the anger of the #2 man in Egypt. Remember this "plan" didn't work with Esau, and now, it won't work with Joseph.
 - ii) The important thing to notice about Jacob is he "let go".
 - b) A common Christian expression is "Let go, let God." It refers to letting go of your worries and letting God take over the situation. That is what Jacob did here by entrusting Benjamin to Jacob's other sons.
 - c) Notice Jacob blessed the brothers before they went:
 - i) In Verse 14, Jacob invoked the name of God to be with them. It is a "quick prayer" that God be in charge of the situation. This is the second part of the phrase "Letting go, letting God".
 - d) Notice the last phrase was "I am bereaved, I am bereaved".
 - i) It is very painful to "let go". When you want something really bad and your not wanting to "let go" of doing it your way, the actual action of letting go can be very traumatic, as it was to Jacob here. Most adults can relate to this situation at some point in their life.
 - e) There's another fun "word-picture to think about:
 - i) Remember Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver.
 - ii) The Hebrew word for "silver" and "money" are the same word.
 - iii) The first time the brothers went to Egypt, they went with 10 "pieces of money.
 - iv) Now they are going back with twice as much, or "20 pieces of silver/money."
 - v) I don't think it's a coincidence that the same amount of money used to sell Joseph was the same amount they are using to "redeem" themselves.

27. Verse 15: So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon."
- a) Joseph is "setting" up a big meal where he can reveal himself to his brothers.
 - b) You read this little section and I think of the "Prodigal son" story by Jesus.
 - i) To summarize, when the bad son, realized he was wrong, and wanted to go back to dad and live as a servant, the father, got excited when he saw the son coming, and killed the fatted calf to prepare for a party. (Luke 15:22-24).
 - ii) Joseph saw his brothers coming with Benjamin.
 - iii) He saw his brothers willing to trust God and bring Benjamin down.
 - iv) On that much alone, Joseph, is a "word-picture" of God realizing that Jacob had "let go, let God", and on that much alone, was willing to celebrate.
 - c) Remember that the brothers were starving for grain at this point. Once they "let go", they got a steak dinner because they trusted in God. ☺
28. Verse 17: The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house. ¹⁸ Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys."
- a) The brothers didn't trust Joseph. They figured, "He must be setting us up so he can kill us publicly at some big event."
 - b) The application is that many people can't handle the blessings of God. Why? Because they can't comprehend "getting something for nothing". That is what God's grace is all about. People think they have to earn God's favor. It is incomprehensible that God just wants to bless us, simply because He wants to.
29. Verse 19: So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. ²⁰ "Please, sir," they said, "we came down here the first time to buy food. ²¹ But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver--the exact weight--in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. ²² We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks." ²³ "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them.
- a) The first thing that caught my attention here is that the brothers are not speaking to Joseph directly, but to his "steward". Joseph doesn't come unto the scene until Verse 26.
 - i) The brothers came pleading for their life. The steward responds with, "The God of your father" has given them their treasure.
 - ii) Notice all the blessings come out at this point:
 - a) Simeon is released from jail.
 - b) The brothers are not accused of any crime of theft. Their worries are over.
 - iii) So who is this "steward" character? I'll argue it's a model of the Holy Spirit.
 - iv) Remember that a nickname of the Holy Spirit is "comforter".
 - a) It is the idea that He brings us the peace of God.
 - b) The brothers also "let go, let God". The steward says, "Don't be afraid".
 - c) Notice the steward refuses to take any personal credit, but gives it all to God. Part of the role of the Holy Spirit is to draw attention to God the Father and Jesus, but not Himself.
 - b) Notice how the brothers are still "blinded" to who Joseph really is. Despite the blessing, despite the fact that Joseph refers to "their God", it doesn't sink in.
 - c) As a word-picture, it leads back to the fact that the "first time", the Israelites were in

- d) Egypt, they didn't "get it". The second time they still didn't get it until Joseph reveals himself who he is. (This won't happen until Chapter 44).
- i) Remember that this is still the seven-year period of famine.
 - ii) I am 100% convinced that this time is a word-picture of the 7-year "tribulation" as described in the Book of Revelation.
 - a) In fact, the prophet Jeremiah, when talking about that future time period, calls it "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7 KJV). Jeremiah ties the 7-year famine time to the future, "Revelation" tribulation.
30. Verse 24: The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. ²⁵ They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.
- a) You can sense the fear in the brothers as they were preparing for the "big meeting" with Joseph again. It gets back to my opening riddle of the "definition of minor surgery".
 - b) The brothers didn't know what was going to happen, and they still dealt with fear.
 - c) The same way, we fear that God is going to punish us. We can't "handle" the fact that God wants to forgive us of our sins and we "deserve" punishment.
31. Verse 26: When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. ²⁷ He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?" ²⁸ They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed low to pay him honor. ²⁹ As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." ³⁰ Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.
- a) For Joseph, having all of brothers together in one room was too much to handle. He had to leave the room to cry. Seeing everyone again overwhelmed him.
 - b) Imagine the years Joseph spent in slavery and jail, thinking he would never see his family again. The emotion of the moment doesn't need much commentary.
 - c) The point for you and I is you never know what God has planned for us. Never, never give up on God, just as God will never give up on us!
 - d) In the Gospels, Jesus wept twice. Once was at the tomb of Lazarus when he saw the lack of faith in his followers. (Ref.: John 11:35) The other time was on "Palm Sunday" when the Nation of Israel failed to recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Ref. Luke 19:41).
 - i) You can also see this paragraph as a "word-picture" of the Nation of Israel "assembled" but still failing to recognize the big-picture of what was happening.
32. Verse 31: After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, "Serve the food." ³² They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.
- a) A small cultural point to add. The Egyptians believed they were superior to all other races. Therefore, they would not eat with others. Even Joseph couldn't eat with them, despite his power as he was not one of them.
33. Verse 33: The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴ When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him.
- a) The brothers were seated in birth order. The mathematical odds of that happening by random (assuming you couldn't tell who is the oldest) is about 14,000,000 to one!
 - b) Yet despite the "odds", the brothers still didn't "get it".

- c) The last verse mentions that Benjamin got five times the food of the others.
 - i) Some see this as Joseph showing his love for his long lost brother. The number “five” in the bible is often tied to God’s grace.
 - ii) Personally, I see this as one more test. Remember they sold Joseph into slavery out of jealousy. I believe Joseph wanted to see if they would get jealous of Benjamin as well.
34. OK, I’m running way long. Sorry about that.
35. I promised in the introduction of this lesson that I would come back to the question of “Why would Joseph want to test his brothers?”
- a) Let’s face it, Joseph at any point could have revealed who he was, and they all live happily ever after. If he was still angry, he could have had them killed.
 - b) Which makes me wonder, I wonder what Potiphar’s wife was thinking now that Joseph was #2 man in Egypt? ☺ What was the “wine steward” thinking now that Joseph, who he left in jail for two years, is now his boss? These clues indicate that Joseph was not vengeance oriented.
 - c) I believe the answer has to do with our relationship with God.
 - d) I’ve stated many times in these bible lessons that Christians are a “construction project”. God is working on making us better people so we can spend eternity with Him.
 - e) Most people are aware of Jesus’ statement of “I go to prepare a place (mansion) for you in heaven.” (John 14:2) What many Christians don’t think about is while Jesus is busy building us a home in heaven, at the same time, He is preparing us for that home.
 - f) That is what Joseph is doing here. Joseph desires a wonderful, eternal relationship with his family again. Before that happens, the brothers have to be “set free” from their own “prison and slavery”. That is what we are reading in these chapters, and hopefully, that is what God is working on in our life.
36. Time to close in prayer: Heavenly Father, we too have been in captivity to our sin. Bring to the surface our past hurts and our past sins so we can confess them to you. Help us to remember that salvation is not about being “good enough” and to not live in fear of punishment. Help us to keep that eternal focus especially during those difficult moments of our lives when we don’t see the answers and can’t see what is coming ahead. Help us to remember that everything in our life is filtered through you, for our learning and our growth. Let not these lessons be wasted. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.