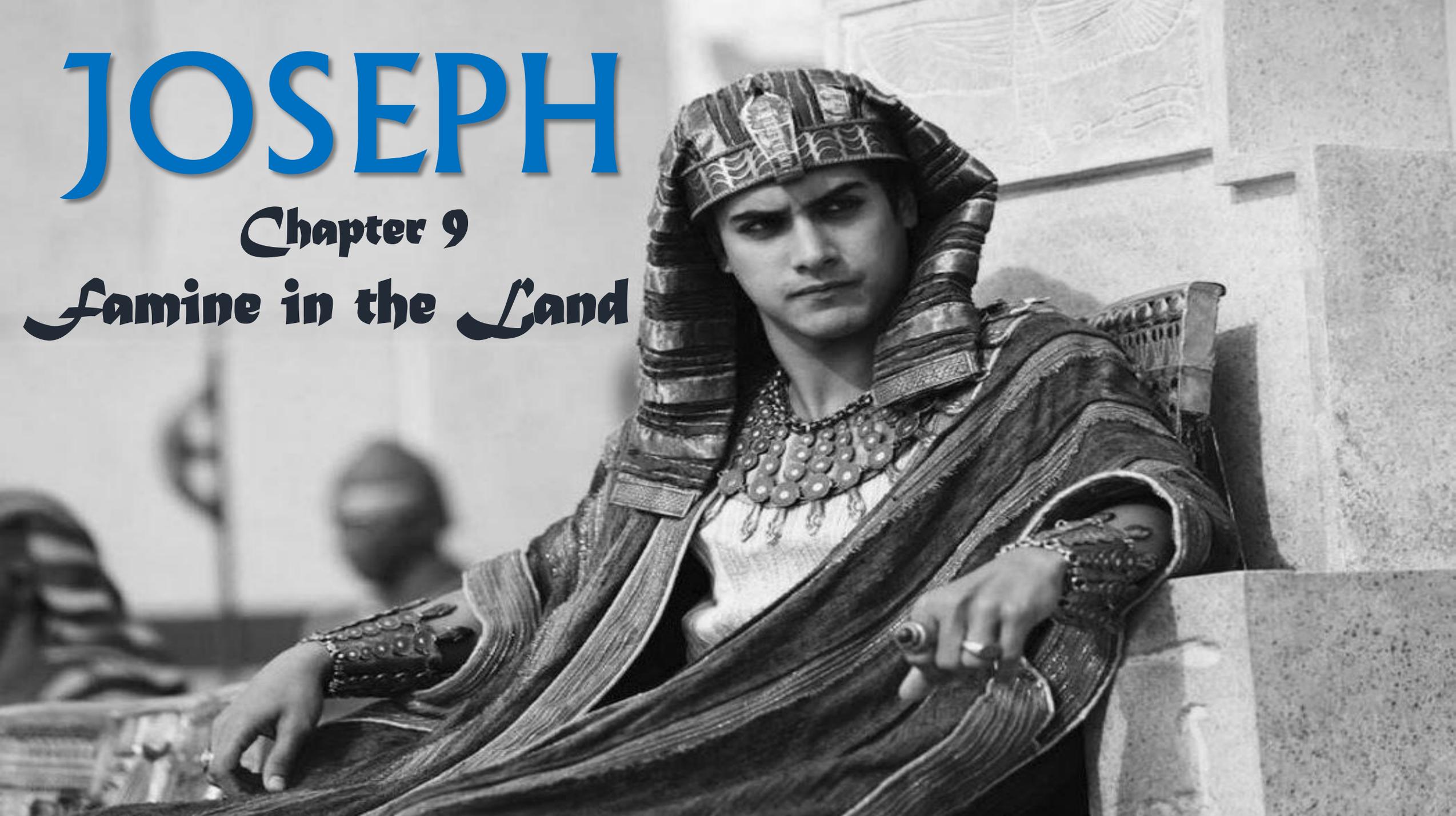


JOSEPH

Chapter 9

Famine in the Land



Chapters Nine

Famine in the Land

Part 1

The Meet Up

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

Genesis 42:1-2

On the surface, this verse means that the brothers were at a loss as to what to do in order to provide for the family... and were sitting around moping and 'staring' at each other.

Digging deeper, there is the potential that when Jacob began talking about grain in Egypt; the brothers stopped in their tracks or 'froze in fear' when Egypt was mentioned.

Jacob was alarmed when they didn't all jump for joy at the good news of food in Egypt...and instead they sat stunned, staring at each other.

**This may have been the case,
as they have carried around a very
big secret about Egypt for 22 years now!**

Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him.

Genesis 42:3-4

Little did the brothers know what lay ahead of them, in a few days, in Egypt...

But God knew this day perfectly.

Remember that
3 branches and **3** baskets
each meant **3** days...

**The number of objects within the
servant's dreams represent time.**

In Joseph's first dream sequence there are
10 brothers with 10 bowing sheaves
and 1 Joseph with 1 standing sheaf. (22)

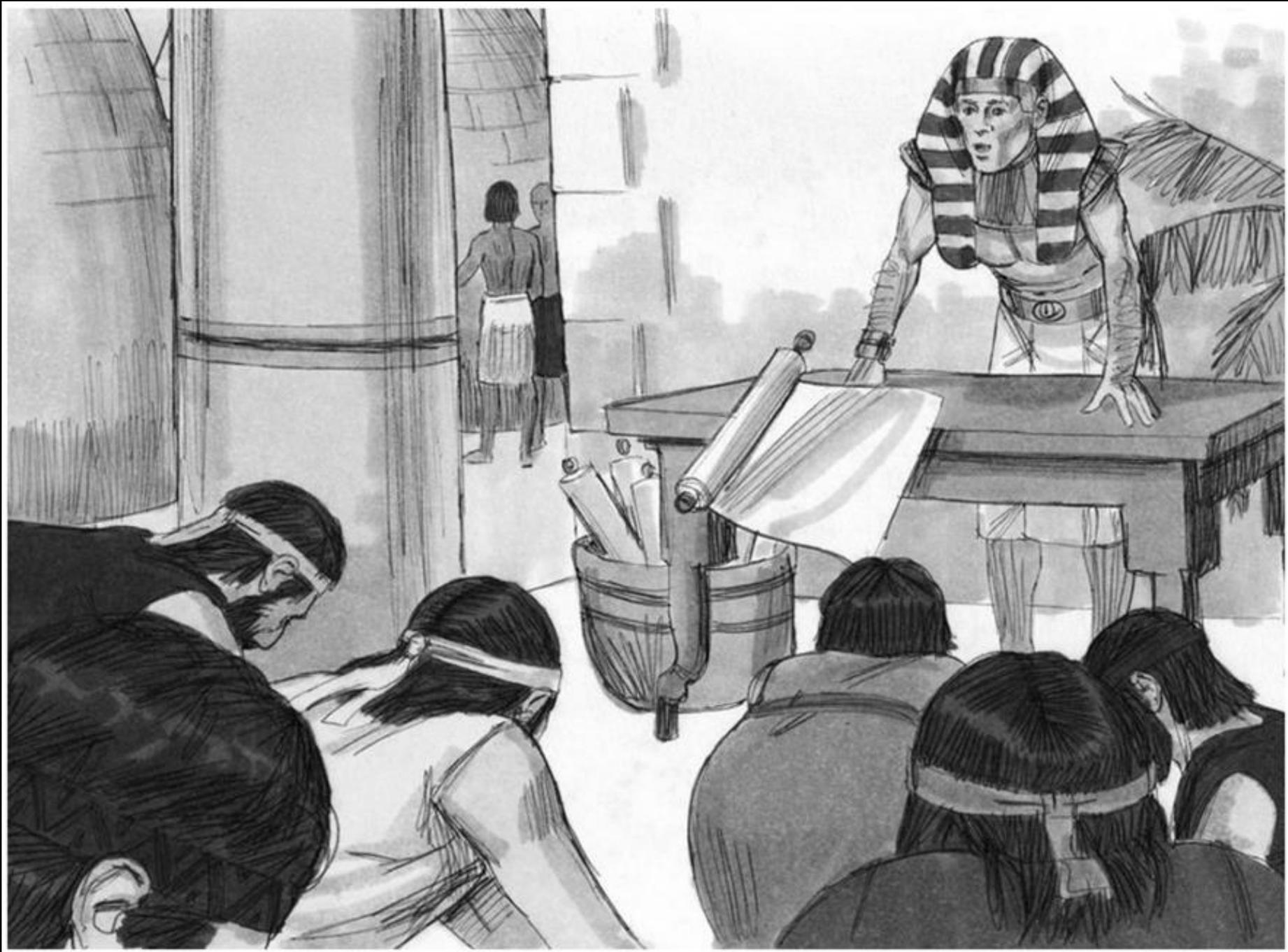
We know that Joseph spent **13** years between Potiphar's house & prison before reaching Pharaoh...then another **7** years of plenty and **2** years of famine before the brothers arrived.

(22 years)

22 years have *passed* from pit to *palace*
and from fields to famine...
And the time has come for
Joseph's childhood dreams to be fulfilled!

Now Joseph was the governor of the land,
the person who sold grain to all its people.
So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed
down to him with their faces to the ground.

Genesis 42:6



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.” Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.

Genesis 42:7-8

In a major turn of events,
the *deceivers* have become *deceived*
and the 10 brothers now bow before Joseph,
who is veiled as Prime Minister of Egypt.

Then he remembered his dreams
about them and said to them,
“You are spies! You have come to see
where our land is unprotected.”

Genesis 42:9

It would likely be a mistake to take this verse to mean that Joseph had *'forgotten'* his childhood dreams or not thought of his brothers until this point.

As I have stated, I believe that the Lord revealed some portion of the meaning of his dreams to him along his journey to the pit to Potiphar's house...and this was the source of his faith, his character & his hope!

I take this verse to mean that in this moment Joseph *recognized* that the time had come and that his childhood dreams were being fulfilled in his presence at this very moment.

**The first four uses of this word
'remember'
in the Bible, all in Genesis,
would affirm the same idea.**

But God *remembered* Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded.

Genesis 8:1

But God *[made good on His promises to]*

Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. Genesis 8:1

I will *remember* my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Genesis 9:15

I will *[make good on my promises]* between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Genesis 9:15

Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds,
I will see it and *remember* the everlasting
covenant between God and all living
creatures...Genesis 9:16

So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he *remembered* Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Genesis 19:29

Each of these uses of the word
'remember' are in regards to

God making good on his promises to people.

If we take that same meaning and apply it here to Joseph 'remembering his dreams'...

We could make the argument that:
Joseph *recalled* what God had promised
to him through his dreams...and Joseph
is *realizing* that God is making good
on those promises now, as his brothers bow.

Let's quickly compare the word **'remember'**
to the word **'forget'** in Genesis 41:51

Before the years of famine came, two sons were
born to Joseph by Asenath...

Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said;
“It is because God has caused me to *forget* all
my trouble and all my father’s household.”

Genesis 41:50-51

Should we take this verse to mean that Joseph has **'forgotten'** being thrown in a pit, forgotten the face of his father & brother's and forgotten his years of suffering?

Certainly he remembers.

However, Joseph is saying that the Lord's blessing in his life, by raising him to Pharaoh's palace & giving him children, has cancelled out or caused him to count his suffering as nothing in comparison to this grace.

We should take this verse to mean that Joseph considers his dreams to have been fulfilled at this point. God has raised him up, his suffering was purposed on this position.

This doubly confirms the idea that when Joseph
'remembers his dreams about his brothers'
when they bow it is not meaning that he had
forgotten his dreams...

But rather, by the Lord's grace he believed his dreams to have been fulfilled already through the position of Prime Minister etc...and he praises the Lord for that through the naming of his son!

**Then, when he sees his brothers bowing,
he realizes the second part of the dreams.
It was not just depicted that Joseph would
be raised up, but that the brothers would
also be brought low.**

Then he remembered his dreams
about them and said to them,
“You are spies! You have come to see
where our land is unprotected.”

Genesis 42:9

At the very moment Joseph remembers his dreams about his brothers he instantly, innately or divinely begins to press them and put them to the test.

This sequence of events should be interpreted in the same manner as the instant solution that Joseph gave Pharaoh regarding his dreams.

The solution was part of a divine, Spirit guided, interpretation.

In the same manner, the *series* of tests which Joseph is about to unleash on his brothers is not his own doing.

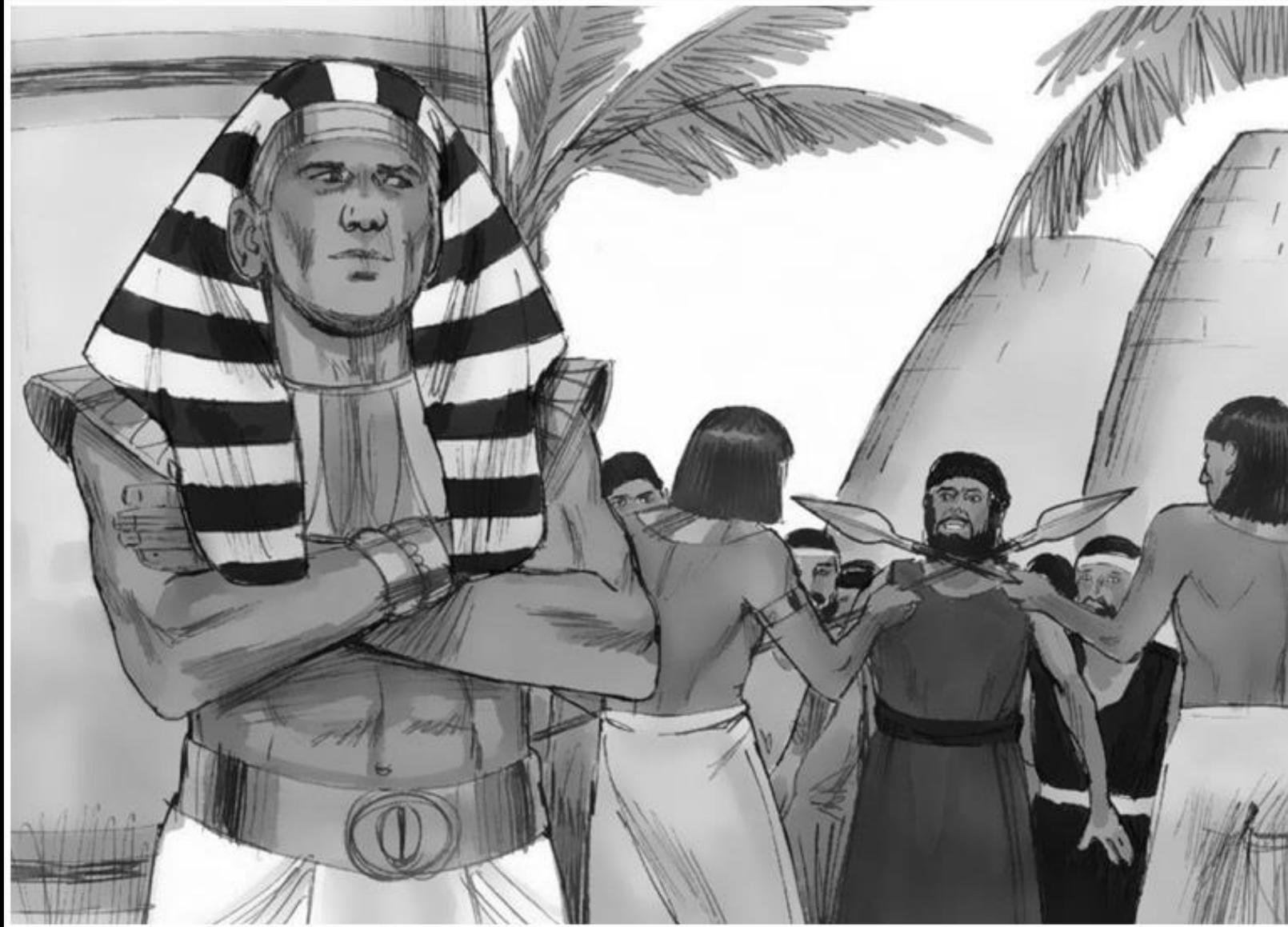
Rather, the Lord is guiding Joseph by His *Spirit* as to what he should do.

Part 2

The Test

The Spirit of God guided Joseph as to how he should interact with his brothers. This interaction developed in the form of a series of tests.

These tests would prove certain things...



(1) The tests would *reveal* the brother's *remorse* over their betrayal of Joseph.

(2) The tests would prove that the *character*
of the brothers has truly *changed*.

(3) The tests would *position* Joseph to either *punish* or forgive his brothers.

And by forgiving them,
Joseph would prove that the Lord's refining
work in his life had accomplished its goal!

“You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.” “No, my lord,” they answered.

“Your servants have come to buy food. We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.” “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

Genesis 42:9-12

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.”

Genesis 42:13

Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you:
You are spies! 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.

Genesis 42:14-15

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!” And he put them all in custody for three days.

Genesis 42:16-17

The three days which the brothers spend awaiting their fate, at the hands of Joseph, in prison, *reflect* the three days which the cupbearer and baker spent awaiting their fate, at the hands of Joseph.

The three day wait for the cupbearer and baker leaves us in suspense; wondering if Joseph is walking with the Lord in such a way that he is able to foretell the future.

The three day wait for the brothers in prison leaves us in suspense; wondering if Joseph is walking with the Lord in such a way that he is able to *forgive* the past.

On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 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. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.”

Genesis 42:18-20

It is unclear at this moment as to why Joseph wants the youngest brother to return to Egypt. Does Joseph want to keep Benjamin for himself?

Next week we will see that the plan is to set up a climactic reconstruction of the events of favoritism & betrayal 22 years ago... by using the other son of Rachel.

But for now, a son of Leah will suffice.



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 on us.”

Genesis 42:21

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.”

Genesis 42:22

The brother's interpret this series of events as a **punishment** from God regarding their sin against Joseph.

For the past 22 years, they likely have been interpreting everything that goes wrong in their life as divine-justice against them for their heinous treatment of their brother.

None the less, their comments reveal several things...



(1) They feel *regret*/remorse over Joseph.
(Pain)

(2) They *admit* their guilt/sin over Joseph.
(Punishment)

(3) They assume *accountability*/
the need to make amends.
(Payment)

The test is already working...

They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again.

Genesis 42:23-24

**Though the test was working,
the testing was incomplete...**

He had Simeon taken from them
and bound before their eyes.

Genesis 42:24

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, they loaded their
grain on their donkeys and left.

Genesis 42:25-26

Under the guidance of the Spirit, Joseph is *placing* the brothers in a nearly identical situation that they were in 22 years ago.

**(1) One of their brothers
is a captive of Egypt.**

(2) Their pockets are full of silver.

**(3) They must tell their father
what has happened.**

**Will the brothers betray Simeon?
Will they leave him for dead in Egypt?**

Will the brothers pocket the silver?

Will they take another profit over a brother?

Will the brothers tell Jacob the truth?

Will they deceive Jacob once again?

Part 3

The Return

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. “My silver has been returned,” he said to his brothers. “Here it is in my sack.”

Genesis 42:27-28a

**Here we get a glimpse of the answer
to our previous questions...**

Will the brothers pocket the silver?

Will they take another profit from a brother?

Whichever brother found the silver *returned* in his sack, discovered it alone; yet does not keep it for himself...he *reveals* it to the rest.

**Their hearts sank and they turned to
each other trembling and said,
“What is this that God has done to us?”**

Genesis 42:28b

This again shows that the brothers have been interpreting everything that goes wrong in their life as divine-justice against them for their treatment of their brother.

**Imagine having to live your life this way
because of a single decision 22 years ago!**

Ironically, God is doing something very kind, merciful & gracious on their behalf!

It's a horrible place to be when your life has been so darkened by sin and your view of God is so tainted with guilt...that you are unable to see His blessing in your life.

Our decisions really, really, really matter!

One choice in a moment of jealousy has caused 22 years of guilt, paranoia and fear.

When they came to their father Jacob
in the land of Canaan, they told him all
that had happened to them.

Genesis 42:29

They said, “The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’”

Genesis 42:30-32

**“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. 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.’”**

Genesis 42:33-34

So far the brothers are *passing* the test.
They are telling Jacob the truth about
their trip, exactly as it occurred.

Furthermore, they did not abandon Simeon as they had abandoned Joseph. But, Simeon is their blood brother from Leah...is that the reason why, or have they changed?

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.

Genesis 42:35

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!”

Genesis 42:36

Jacob displays his pronopia.

That is; a *belief* that that the world is set up to somehow *benefit* certain people and harm or cause a disadvantage to others.

However, God is actually doing something very kind, merciful & gracious on Jacob's behalf! God is going to *ble**ss*** Jacob *be**yond*** measure and reunite him with his cherished son!

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!”

Genesis 42:36

Jacob reminds the 10 brothers of his *distain* for them. They are the sons of the wife he did not love and they are the source of his pain.

These comments are part of the broader test which is unfolding. The brothers are being placed in a very similar situation, concerning their father's *disregard* for them.

Will the brothers respond to their father's rejection with the same kind of anger as they did 22 years ago?

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.”

Genesis 42:37

Desperate to make amends for the pain the brothers have caused Jacob; Reuben blurts out the foolish notion that Jacob could put his own two sons to death if he does not return with Benjamin.

This is a meritless offer, as Reuben does not put his own neck on the line and it is an offer which Jacob will never accept.

The price of a bad decision rises over time.

Reuben had the opportunity to rescue Joseph, without cost. Now, he is willing to offer his two children to make amends.

(A stitch in time, saves nine.)

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.”

Genesis 42:38

Jacob reminds the 10 brothers that he does not view them as sons. He only ever had two sons and now he only has one son remaining.

**It appears that the brothers have changed,
but that Jacob has not...**

Again, these comments are part of the broader test which is unfolding. The brothers are being placed in a very similar situation, concerning their father's *favoritism* towards Rachel's sons!

Will the brothers respond to their father's favoritism with the same kind of betrayal as they did 22 years ago?

In a way, the Lord is not just administering these tests for the brothers to prove to Joseph & to themselves that they have changed...

But he is also giving them a second chance
to get it right and 'buy back' or 'redeem'
as it were the 22 lost years.

Next week, we will see that the Lord will more than make up for the lost years and the sins of the brothers with His overflowing forgiveness, grace and mercy, as displayed through Joseph.

JOSEPH



Chapter Ten

The Brothers Come to Town