

11.08 Joseph's Brothers' First Visit (Genesis 42:1–38; Psalm 105:16–22)

(This lesson could be combined with Lesson 11.06.)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) Flash cards from “Joseph,” Genesis Series 5, A Beka Book, Pensacola, FL
- (optional) Herein Is Love Commentary Series; *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- (none for this lesson)

Scripture (NASB)

Genesis 42:1 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, “Why are you staring at one another?” 2 He said, “Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.” 3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, “I am afraid that harm may befall him.” 5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan *also*.

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

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

18 Now Joseph said to them on the third day, “Do this and live, for I fear God: 19 if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for *the rest of* you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, 20 and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die.” And they did so. 21 Then they said to one another, “Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.” 22 Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not tell you, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.” 23 They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them. 24 He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. 25 Then Joseph gave orders to

fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.

26 So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there. 27 As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. 28 Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack." And their hearts sank, and they *turned* trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

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

35 Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. 36 Their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me." 37 Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you." 38 But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."

Psalm 105:16 When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, 17 he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. 18 His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; 19 until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. 20 The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; 21 he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, 22 to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom.

Introduction/Review:

Joseph, made wise by God, became ruler in Egypt. Only Pharaoh was above him, and Pharaoh gave him free rein to collect and store grain in seven plentiful years and to sell it when the famine came. This famine reached lands beyond Egypt.

Story:

Canaan, where Jacob and his sons lived, dried up with famine. If anything had been planted, no rain fell to water it. Without water, plants shriveled up and died. There was nothing to be done about this situation. ✓Perhaps with no work to be done, the sons sat around idle.

Ten sons go to Egypt

Jacob, hearing that Egypt was selling grain, said to his sons, "Why are you sitting around staring at one another? I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy grain for us so that we may live and not die. Benjamin will stay here because I don't want anything to happen to him as happened to his brother."

So ten sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun—went to Egypt land. ✓Depending on the city of arrival in Egypt, this distance was about 200 to 250 miles from Hebron, where Jacob lived. ✓Traveling at the rate of twenty miles per day, the journey might have taken from ten to thirteen days.

Joseph tests his brothers

Whom did they meet when they arrived in Egypt? None other than their brother Joseph. Oh, they didn't recognize Joseph, but Joseph certainly recognized them. When they came and bowed down to him with their

faces to the ground, Joseph was reminded of the dreams he had had as a boy; they were being fulfilled before his eyes.

Testing his brothers, he spoke harshly in Egyptian. ✓Although they could tell by his expression that Joseph was hostile, an interpreter translated Joseph's words. "Where have you come from?"

The brothers answered, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

"No!" replied Joseph. "You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land so that you might invade us."

Now, why would Joseph talk like this to his brothers? Was he paying them back for their harsh treatment of him? I doubt it. ✓Perhaps he was seeking information about what was happening at home (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/genesis/42-12.html>).

The brothers denied Joseph's accusation. "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men; your servants are not spies." Notice, they say, "My lord," showing their subjection to him.

Yet Joseph said to them, "No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!"

Again, the brothers protested and Joseph got a little more information. "Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive."

Ah! Now Joseph knew his father and Benjamin were alive and that they probably thought Joseph was dead. Nevertheless, he continued with his accusations. "It is as I said to you; you are spies. This is how you will be tested: You shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! Send one of you to get your brother while you remain confined in prison so that your words may be tested to see whether you are telling the truth. If you will not do that, surely you are spies."

So he put them all together in prison for three days ✓in order that they could decide what to do and who should go back to Canaan to get Benjamin.

But Joseph changed the terms on the third day. He said, "Do this and live, for I fear God: if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in prison. The rest of you may go and carry grain to your households because of the famine. When you come back, bring your youngest brother to me so that your words may be verified, and you will not die."

Brothers remember guilt

The brothers consulted among themselves, not knowing Joseph perfectly understood every word they spoke. They seemed to think that the evil happening to them was payback for their treatment of Joseph and said as much: "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us; yet we would not listen. That's why this distress has come upon us."

Reuben answered, "Didn't I tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'? But you would not listen. Now we are being paid back for his blood."

Hearing this was too much for Joseph. He turned away from his guilty brothers, ✓perhaps going into another room, and wept. When he returned to them, he took Simeon, tied him up in the sight of the others, and sent the nine away.

Joseph sends brothers

Secretly, Joseph gave orders to his servants to fill the brothers' bags with grain, to return every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey.

So the brothers loaded their donkeys with their grain sacks and left for home. That night when they stopped

at an inn, one of the brothers opened his sack to give food to his donkey. He discovered his money in his sack and exclaimed, “My money has been returned; it’s in my sack!”

“Oh, no!” cried the others. “What is going on?” Their hearts sank, and they turned, trembling, to one another, saying, “What is this that God is doing to us?”

Brothers return home

When they got home, the men told their father all that had happened to them. “The lord of the land, spoke harshly with us and thought we were spies. We said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no longer alive, and the youngest stayed with our father in Canaan.’”

“The lord of the land said to us, ‘Leave one of your brothers with me and go. Take grain for your households because of the famine. By this I will know that you are honest men: If you bring your youngest brother to me, I will know that you are not spies but honest men.’”

After speaking with Jacob, the brothers emptied their sacks of grain. “What’s this?!” cried the first son. “My bundle of money is in my sack!”

“Mine too!” shouted another son.

The same refrain rang out six more times as each brother found his money.

When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were truly dismayed.

Jacob despairs

Jacob accused, “You have taken away my children! Joseph is no more. Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin. All these things are against me.”

Reuben, the oldest, stepped up to his father and made a rash and foolish promise: “You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring Benjamin back to you. Put him in my care, and I will return him to you.” We learn later that Reuben is as unstable as water. He is a lot of big talk. I, for one, do not believe him.

Jacob had no intention of anyone’s caring for Benjamin. He flatly refused, saying, “No. My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead. He is the only one left of his mother. If harm should befall him, then you would bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”

Oh, what a desperate time. It looks to Jacob as if all is against him. Is it?

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus

Jesus, as part of the Trinity, does what God does: “God in his providence sometimes seems harsh with those he loves, and speaks roughly to those for whom yet he has great mercy in store” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/genesis/42.html>).

“Thus God deals with the souls he designs for special comfort and honour; he first humbles them, and terrifies them, and brings them under a spirit of bondage, and then binds up their wounds by the Spirit of adoption” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/genesis/42.html>).

- God is always at work even though it appears all is in shambles. We call this *providence*.

Activities:

- Play dough: ten men; sacks; donkeys; money bags
- Snack: Granola or trail mix, preferably without candy, sprinkled on or mixed with pudding
- Discuss reasons why the brothers did not recognize Joseph. Include the following ideas: It had been

about twenty-two years since they had last seen him. Back then, his beard had not grown but, though shaved, was visible now. Now he was clothed as a prince. He spoke the Egyptian language. The splendor, authority, and servitude seen around him were not what they expected of one who was probably dead (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-42-8.html>). In addition, Joseph disguised himself—perhaps by his voice or with the cosmetics of Egypt.

- Discuss why Joseph kept Simeon and not the firstborn, Reuben, in prison. ✓He knew Reuben had tried to save Joseph when the others plotted to do away with him.
- A seven-minute video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBDDeepyS4> shows an extensive silo construction at Saqqara (Memphis) where Joseph could have met his brothers. According to this video, Joseph was very possibly Imhotep (pronounced “EYE moh tep”), the prime minister and chief architect under Pharaoh Djoser (sounds almost like *Joseph*), first pharaoh of Egypt’s third dynasty.
- Sing stanzas 1–5 of “Joseph,” found at Lesson 11.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org, where an audio and a visual are available.
- Review questions: (Game: Cut ten rectangular shapes out of felt to represent sacks. A student may place a “sack” on the flannel board for each correct answer.)
 1. Why did Jacob send his ten sons to Egypt? [To buy grain because of the famine.]
 2. Describe the brothers’ bowing to Joseph. How did they do it? [Bowed with their faces to the ground.]
 3. Of what did Joseph accuse his brothers? [Of being spies, looking for undefended areas of the country.]
 4. How did Joseph say he would believe the brothers were not spies? What would they have to do? [Bring their youngest brother to Egypt with them.]
 5. Where did Joseph put all ten brothers? [In prison for three days.]
 6. Rather than send one brother back to fetch Benjamin, what did Joseph decide to do? [Keep one brother while the others went back.]
 7. Who did Joseph keep in prison? [Simeon.]
 8. What did one brother discover when he fed his donkey on the way back home the first night? [His money was in his sack.]
 9. Who else discovered his money? [All the other nine brothers.]
 10. Why did Jacob not want to send Benjamin? [He was the last son of Rachel. He feared something bad would happen to him.]

Memory Verse[s]: (NASB)

- Genesis 42:28—“What is this that God has done to us?” (Even as this exclamation of God’s hand in events came in a time of distress, so can it come in times of apparent blessing.)

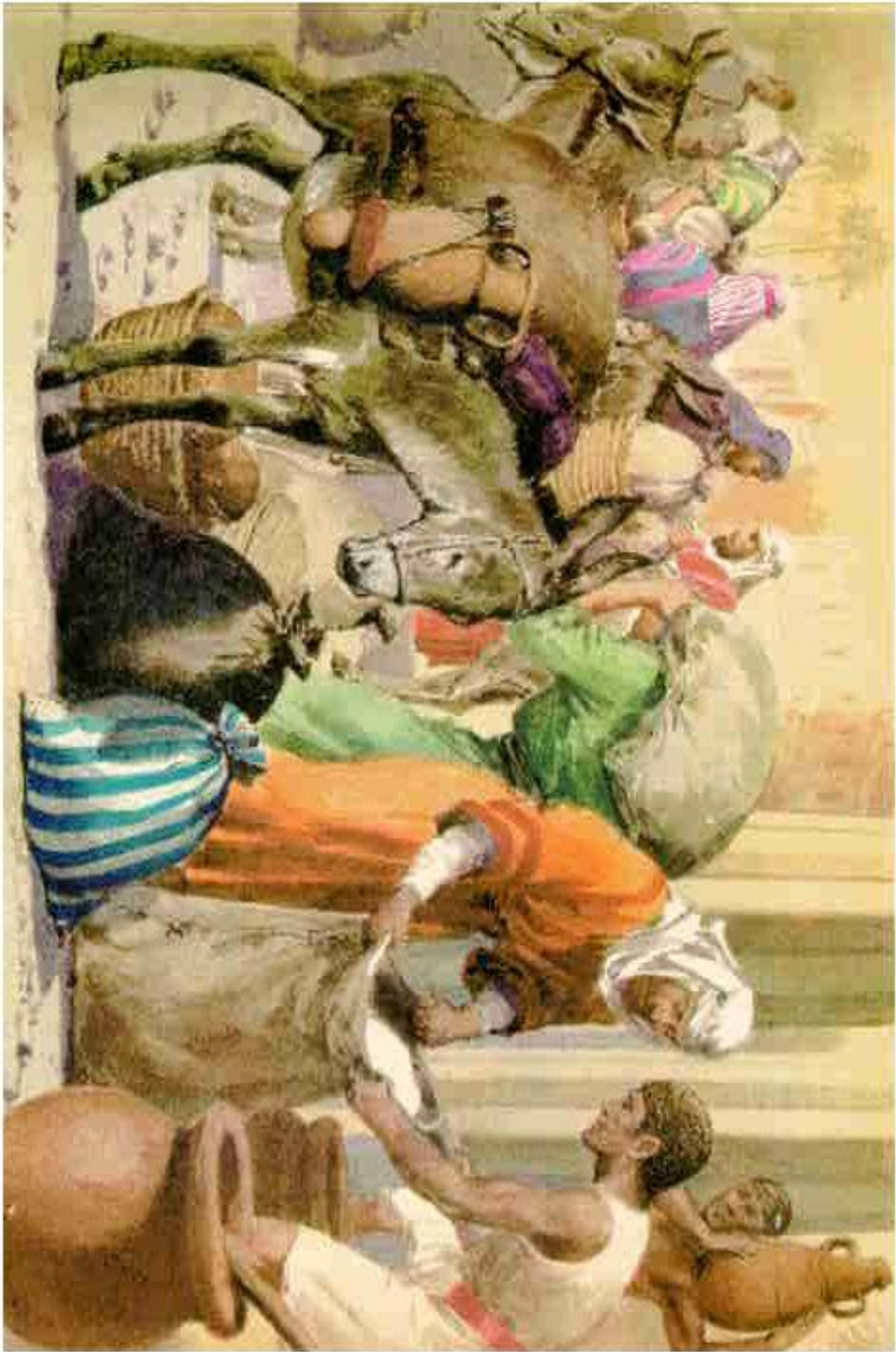
Handwork:

- Make pipe cleaner figures. Bend the knees of the figures and show how the brothers bowed before Joseph face down. (Instructions are at <https://www.artistshelpingchildren.org/pipecleanersartscraftsideaskids.html>).





<http://pastorofmyhouse.blogspot.com/2010/01/january-16-genesis-42-43.html>





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