

# Joseph

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Genesis 42-49

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# Joseph and the Famine

- Genesis 42-45: 121 of 134 verses are from J except (13 from E)
- J: Genesis 42:1-4, 6, 8-20, 26-34, 38
- E: Genesis 42:5, 7, 21-25, 35-37
- Genesis 42
  - The E verses inserted to J's story are mostly conversations between the brothers (and Jacob at one point) and do not alter the basics of the story
    - E is redundant regarding famine, lack of recognition of Joseph, finding the money returned
    - Recall that the E author had God change Jacob's name to Israel (J did not)
  - The 10 brothers go to Egypt to buy grain, leaving Benjamin behind with Jacob
  - Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him
  - Joseph accuses them of being spies, and demands that the youngest brother be brought to Egypt
  - The brothers pay for grain and leave, only to later discover that their money has been placed in the grain sacks

## E's Story of Joseph and his brothers Genesis 42:5, 7, 21-25, 35-37

Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them. And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them.

As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me." Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

### Genesis 42:1-4, 6, 8-20

When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him.

Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land." They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies."

He said to them, "No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see." And they said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more." But Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you. You are spies. By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies." And he put them all together in custody for three days.

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 remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die." And they did so.

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

### Genesis 42: 26-34, 38

Then they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed. And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

When they came to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, "The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly to us and took us to be spies of the land. But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we have never been spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of our father. One is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.' Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your households, and go your way. Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I shall know that you are not spies but honest men, and I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land.'"

But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

# Joseph

- J: Genesis 43:1-13,15-23a, 24-34 and all of chapter 44
- Genesis 43
  - Jacob reluctantly sends his sons back to Egypt with Benjamin, and has them take some gifts
  - Joseph has a banquet prepared for them
  - The brothers are fearful when they are called to Joseph's house and they confess that they received their money back on their first trip
  - They give Joseph the gifts
  - Joseph gets choked up and has to leave to regain his composure, and then Joseph feeds the brothers
  - Joseph gives Benjamin 5 portions of food

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

43:1-13

Now the famine was severe in the land. And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food." But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'" Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?" They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?" And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."

Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight. Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man.

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

43:15-23a

So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon." The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house. And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys." So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house, and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money."



## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

43:24-34

And when the man had brought the men into Josephs house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, they prepared the present for Josephs coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.

When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mothers son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food." They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. Portions were taken to them from Josephs table, but Benjamins portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

# Joseph

- Genesis 44 (all J)
  - Joseph orders that their silver be put into their food bags, and his silver cup into Benjamin's bag
  - The brothers leave, and then Joseph has his men overtake them and stop them
  - They do and the brothers claim innocence from stealing Joseph's silver and cup saying if any have it, he will become a servant
  - They are in great despair when the silver cup is found in Benjamin's bag
  - Joseph says he will keep Benjamin, but Judah argues that their father will die when he learns Benjamin was kept
  - Judah offers himself instead

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

### Genesis 44: 1-13

Then he commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the mens sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each mans money in the mouth of his sack, and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him.

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away with their donkeys. They had gone only a short distance from the city. Now Joseph said to his steward, "Up, follow after the men, and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination? You have done evil in doing this.'"

When he overtook them, he spoke to them these words. They said to him, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lords house? Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lords servants." He said, "Let it be as you say: he who is found with it shall be my servant, and the rest of you shall be innocent." Then each man quickly lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. And he searched, beginning with the eldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamins sack. Then they tore their clothes, and every man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

### Genesis 44: 14-29

When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there. They fell before him to the ground. Joseph said to them, "What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?" And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found." But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the man in whose hand the cup was found shall be my servant. But as for you, go up in peace to your father."

Then Judah went up to him and said, "Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father, or a brother?' And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' Then you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.'

"When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And when your father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food,' we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. One left me, and I said, "Surely he has been torn to pieces," and I have never seen him since. If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.'

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

Genesis 44: 30-34

Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boys life, as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.' Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

# Joseph Reveals Himself

- Genesis 45
  - The entire chapter is by J except verse 3, which is by E
  - Joseph orders everyone except his brothers out, then breaks down and tells them who he is
  - Joseph tells his brothers to bring their father Jacob to Egypt
  - Joseph says they can all live in the land of Goshen
  - They take many gifts back to Canaan and convince Jacob that Joseph is alive and well
  - Jacob agrees to go to Egypt to see his son Joseph
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## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

Genesis 45: 1-2, 4-15

Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

## J's Story of Joseph and his brothers

### Genesis 45: 16-28

When the report was heard in Pharaoh's house, "Joseph's brothers have come," it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go back to the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the land.' And you, Joseph, are commanded to say, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Have no concern for your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

The sons of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. To each and all of them he gave a change of clothes, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five changes of clothes. To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey. Then he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the way."

So they went up out of Egypt and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. And they told him, "Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." And his heart became numb, for he did not believe them. But when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."



# Jacob Comes to Egypt

- Genesis 46 is a mixture of J, E, and P
- J in Genesis 46:
  - Verse 5b: Jacob (a.k.a. Israel) is taken to Egypt
  - Verses 28-34: Jacob sees Joseph and settles in Goshen
- Genesis 47
  - J wrote verses 1-4, 27a, 29-31
  - P wrote verses 5-12, 27b-28
  - E wrote verses 13-26
  - E explains what Joseph did for Pharaoh, which is to make Pharaoh rich by trading Egypt's food for silver, livestock, and land
  - J discusses only the settling of Jacob and his sons in the land of Goshen
- Genesis 48 is a mixture of P and E (no J)
  - E discusses Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh
  - Jacob blesses the younger Ephraim more than his older brother

J's Story of Jacob's family in Goshen  
Genesis 47: 1-4, 27a, 29-31

So Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, “My father and my brothers, with their flocks and herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan. They are now in the land of Goshen.” And from among his brothers he took five men and presented them to Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What is your occupation?” And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds, as our fathers were.” They said to Pharaoh, “We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. And now, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.”

Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it.

And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.” He answered, “I will do as you have said.” And he said, “Swear to me”; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed.

# The Unlikelihood of the 12 Brothers

- Hundreds of years after the lives of Jacob, Joseph, and the Exodus, there emerge, according to the Bible, 12 tribes of Israel
- These 12 tribes are named after the 12 sons of Jacob
- Does this make any historical sense? Consider the following:
  - According to Exodus (followed by Numbers and Deuteronomy), the family of Jacob and his descendants, who later become the country of Israel, dwelt in Egypt for hundreds of years (400?), most of the time as slaves
  - Then Moses led the people out of Egypt, after God brought the plagues upon Egypt, and Moses led them to the Promised Land (Israel)
  - So how could the 12 tribes be “founded” by 12 men who had been dead for centuries?
- A modern theory is that the 12 tribes are named after their founders, but that they were not actually brothers, and that their brotherhood was simply fabricated (as perhaps the father-son relationships of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph - who knows what really happened!) to artificially create a sense of unity and purpose for the Hebrew people (chosen by God)

# The Poem of Jacob's Blessing

- Genesis 49 includes an ancient poem written by someone unknown who lived long before J
  - J wrote circa 920 BC, after the kingdom split when Solomon died
- J included this poem in his saga (verses 1b-27), which eliminates Reuben, Simeon, and Levi
- So if the brothers are not really the sons of Jacob, my idea is that sometime long after the founding of the 12 tribes, the people came to believe that the founders were brothers and sons of Jacob and the poem was written, and J wrote her story around this idea (so it was not J's original idea)
- Scholars have a theory that only the tribe of Levi went to Egypt, with the other tribes remaining in Israel for the entirety of the period of slavery in Egypt (and thus only the tribe of Levi participated in the Exodus)
- Genesis 49:28-33 are by P, who states (in the last verse of Genesis 49) that Jacob dies

The Poem of Jacob's Blessing  
Genesis 49: 1-6

Then Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.

"Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob,  
listen to Israel your father.

"Reuben, you are my firstborn,  
my might, and the first fruits of my strength,  
preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.  
Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence,  
because you went up to your fathers bed;  
then you defiled, going up to my couch!

"Simeon and Levi are brothers;  
weapons of violence are their swords.  
Let my soul come not into their council;  
O my glory, be not joined to their company.  
For in their anger they killed men,  
and in their willfulness they hamstringed oxen.

The Poem of Jacob's Blessing  
Genesis 49: 7-12

Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,  
and their wrath, for it is cruel!

I will divide them in Jacob  
and scatter them in Israel.

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
your fathers sons shall bow down before you.

Judah is a lion's cub;  
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He stooped down; he crouched as a lion  
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
nor the rulers staff from between his feet,  
until tribute comes to him;  
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Binding his foal to the vine  
and his donkeys colt to the choice vine,  
he has washed his garments in wine  
and his vesture in the blood of grapes.

His eyes are darker than wine,  
and his teeth whiter than milk.

The Poem of Jacob's Blessing  
Genesis 49: 13-18

Zebulun shall dwell at the shore of the sea;  
he shall become a haven for ships,  
and his border shall be at Sidon.

“Issachar is a strong donkey,  
crouching between the sheepfolds.  
He saw that a resting place was good,  
and that the land was pleasant,  
so he bowed his shoulder to bear,  
and became a servant at forced labor.

“Dan shall judge his people  
as one of the tribes of Israel.  
Dan shall be a serpent in the way,  
a viper by the path,  
that bites the horses heels  
so that his rider falls backward.  
I wait for your salvation, O Lord.

The Poem of Jacob's Blessing  
Genesis 49: 19-24

Raiders shall raid Gad,  
but he shall raid at their heels.

“Ashers food shall be rich,  
and he shall yield royal delicacies.

“Naphtali is a doe let loose  
that bears beautiful fawns.

“Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
a fruitful bough by a spring;  
his branches run over the wall.

The archers bitterly attacked him,  
shot at him, and harassed him severely,  
yet his bow remained unmoved;  
his arms were made agile  
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob  
from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,



The Poem of Jacob's Blessing  
Genesis 49: 25-27

by the God of your father who will help you,  
by the Almighty who will bless you  
with blessings of heaven above,  
blessings of the deep that crouches beneath,  
blessings of the breasts and of the womb.  
The blessings of your father  
are mighty beyond the blessings of my parents,  
up to the bounties of the everlasting hills.  
May they be on the head of Joseph,  
and on the brow of him who was set apart from his  
brothers.

“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf,  
in the morning devouring the prey  
and at evening dividing the spoil.”