

interpretation

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interpretation

Volume 12 number 1

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The Lion and the Ass: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis (Chapters 40–43)

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CHAPTER XL

1. AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER THESE THINGS, THAT THE BUTLER OF THE KING OF EGYPT AND HIS BAKER HAD OFFENDED THEIR LORD THE KING OF EGYPT.
2. AND PHARAOH WAS WROTH AGAINST TWO OF HIS OFFICERS, AGAINST THE CHIEF OF THE BUTLERS, AND AGAINST THE CHIEF OF THE BAKERS.

In his commentary, Abrabanel argues that the men who actually served the King were not the Chief Butler and the Chief Baker themselves but men of lower stature.¹ He argues that Pharaoh held the officers responsible for having placed unworthy men in such high position. His argument is based on the fact that the men who committed the sin in Verse One are referred to as the *butler* and the *baker* but the men who are punished in Verse Two are referred to as the *chief of the butlers* and the *chief of the bakers*. This interpretation, however, does not seem tenable because the men who were punished were clearly referred to again as the *butler* and the *baker* in Verse Five. In addition, the *chief of the butlers* speaks of *my sin* in Gen. 41:9. Abrabanel seems to have been forced to this conclusion by the apparently unnecessary repetition of the names in Verse Two. However, his solution does not face the real problem since apparently unnecessary repetitions will occur time and time again throughout the present chapter and are an integral part of its main theme.

3. AND HE PUT THEM IN WARD IN THE HOUSE OF THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD, INTO THE PRISON, THE PLACE WHERE JOSEPH WAS BOUND.
4. AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD CHARGED JOSEPH WITH THEM, AND HE SERVED THEM: AND THEY HAD BEEN IN WARD FOR DAYS.

The syntax of Verse Three repeats the problem implicit in Verse Two. *The house of the captain of the guard is the prison which is the place where Joseph was bound*, and there seems no purpose to this constant reidentification. As we continue to read the chapter we shall see that it is a painting by Chardin. The places and the people are all drawn with surrealistically sharp and unnecessarily clear lines, almost as if ideas would quickly vanish if they were not bound by seven chords.

Verse Four falls into two sections juxtaposed one to another. The first half

1. Abrabanel, *Commentary on the Early Prophets*, Vol. 1, p. 377.

of the verse implies that Joseph was put in command of the two officers, whereas the second half clearly states that he served them. The duality of his role becomes intelligible when we remember his position in the jail. Potiphar, his former master, is the *captain of the guard* and knows that Joseph was innocent. He has therefore placed Joseph in a high position under the guise of being a prisoner.

In addition to the complications and the other unnecessary repetition there is another thread to the story which begins in this verse. Joseph was released from prison when he was thirty years old (Gen. 41:46). Since he remained in prison for two years after the scene of the present chapter (Gen. 41:1) he was at this point twenty-eight years old. He had been taken from his father's home when he was roughly seventeen (Gen. 37:2), and given what we know of Potiphar's wife, it is doubtful that he spent more than a few months in the home of his master. In other words the *days . . . they had been in ward* came to roughly ten years. This point may be insignificant in itself, but it is part of the strange role which time will play in the present chapter.

5. AND THEY DREAMED A DREAM BOTH OF THEM, EACH MAN HIS DREAM IN ONE NIGHT, EACH MAN ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DREAM, THE BUTLER AND THE BAKER OF THE KING OF EGYPT, WHICH WERE BOUND IN THE PRISON.

Again in Verse Five we are presented with the strange sort of clarity which we noticed in Verses Two and Three. The verse is composed of a series of short phrases which identify and reidentify men whose identity had been well established even before the verse started.

The reason for the demand for absolute clarity becomes evident once we read the verse more closely. When the text reads *they dreamed a dream* the bold lines of division begin to fade. The two dreams suddenly become one dream, and so the two dreamers become one dreamer. They cannot be distinguished by the dream but only by the interpretation proper to each man.

6. AND JOSEPH CAME IN UNTO THEM IN THE MORNING, AND LOOKED UPON THEM, AND, BEHOLD, THEY WERE SAD.
7. AND HE ASKED PHARAOH'S OFFICERS THAT WERE WITH HIM IN THE WARD OF HIS LORD'S HOUSE, SAYING, WHEREFORE LOOK YE SO SADLY TO-DAY?

Verse Seven again shows signs of this unnecessary identification. The words *that were with him in the ward of his lord's house* contain at least two ways of reidentifying the men, both of which are superfluous but which add to the strange kind of clarity in the style of the chapter.

When Joseph entered their room in the morning it was as if he had pulled the curtains aside from the window, letting in the sunlight. The men were sad,

and the sharpness of the lines which had been drawn by constant redefinition painted their cell in black and white. The color had all been lost.

8. AND THEY SAID UNTO HIM, WE HAVE DREAMED A DREAM, AND THERE IS NO INTERPRETER OF IT. AND JOSEPH SAID UNTO THEM, DO NOT INTERPRETATIONS BELONG TO GOD? TELL IT, I PRAY YOU, TO ME.

As in Verse Four the dream is continually referred to in the singular. There was only one dream though two men claimed to have dreamed it. There is one other peculiar facet to this verse. Joseph asked the men to tell him the dream because God has the interpretation. However, Joseph never speaks to any being higher than a man throughout the whole book.

9. AND THE CHIEF BUTLER TOLD HIS DREAM TO JOSEPH, AND SAID TO HIM, IN MY DREAM, BEHOLD, A VINE WAS BEFORE ME;
10. AND IN THE VINE WERE THREE BRANCHES: AND IT WAS AS THOUGH IT BUDDED, AND HER BLOSSOMS SHOT FORTH; AND THE CLUSTERS THEREOF BROUGHT FORTH RIPE GRAPES:
11. AND PHARAOH'S CUP WAS IN MY HAND: AND I TOOK THE GRAPES, AND PRESSED THEM INTO PHARAOH'S CUP, AND I GAVE THE CUP INTO PHARAOH'S HAND.

Chapters Forty and Forty-one contain several dreams. There are either two or four dreams depending on how one counts them. The dreams of the present chapter have been referred to as *a dream* in two places (Gen. 40:5,8), and the dreams of Pharaoh will be specifically called *one dream* by Joseph himself (Gen. 41:25).

The vocabulary in and surrounding the dreams tends to contain words which are infrequently used. This tendency, however, is less marked than it was in Chapters Thirty-one and Thirty-two, which dealt with Jacob's magic. We shall give a list of the words involved, including those which appear in Pharaoh's dream.

The list is in fact somewhat more impressive than it seems to be at first since many of the words appear in clusters.

In addition to being characterized by unusual words, the dream appears to each dreamer in terms of his own private position. The dream of the butler concerns butlery and the dream of the baker, bakery.

The dream itself differs from reality in one important aspect—time is condensed. In real life grapes require months to grow and wine must be aged even longer.

12. AND JOSEPH SAID UNTO HIM, THIS IS THE INTERPRETATION OF IT: THE THREE BRANCHES ARE THREE DAYS:

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<i>The word</i>	<i>Number of occurrences in chaps. 40 and 41</i>	<i>Occurrences in the rest of the Dodecateuch</i>	<i>Occurrences in the rest of the Bible</i>	<i>Occurrences of words from the same root</i>
Interpreter, interpretation	13	—	—	—
Branches	2	—	Joel 1:7	Job 40:17 Lam. 1:14
Blossoms	1	—	Is. 18:5 Job 15:33 Song 2:12	Eccles. 12:5 Ezek. 1:7 Song 7:11,13
Clusters	1	Num. 13:23 Num. 13:24 Deut. 32:32	Is. 65:8 Mic. 7:1 Song 1:14 Song 7:8,9	—
Press	1	—	—	—
Meadow	2	—	Job 8:11 Hos. 13:15	—
Ears of Corn	10	Judg. 12:6 Ruth 2:2	Ps. 59:3 Ps. 69:16 Zech. 4:12 Is. 17:5,8 Job 24:24	—
TOTAL: 7 words	30	5	17	6

13. YET WITHIN THREE DAYS SHALL PHARAOH LIFT UP THINE HEAD, AND RESTORE THEE UNTO THY PLACE: AND THOU SHALT DELIVER PHARAOH'S CUP INTO HIS HAND, AFTER THE FORMER MANNER WHEN THOU WAST HIS BUTLER,

Time also plays a central role in the interpretation. Joseph quite rightly says that the interpretation of the dream is that the three branches stand for three days. Once this is understood the rest of the dream becomes clear to any thoughtful human being.

The awareness of time is the crucial key, not only to this dream, but to all three dreams. Apparently the distinction between him who can and him who cannot interpret dreams depends to a large extent upon the interpreter's awareness of the importance of time, and hence, of remembering and forgetting.

The importance of time in interpretation is by no means limited to Joseph's interpretation of the dreams. Time and memory have held the book together ever since the Flood. Only by remembering, that is by forgetting time, have we been able to understand the author's message by seeing the traditions and ways of peoples and places throughout their history. Joseph's way of interpretation

has in effect served as a model for the interpretation of the book for a very long time.

The butler seems to share in some vague way Joseph's awareness of the importance of time. The dream itself concerns the strange relations which arise when time is neglected. As we shall see, the baker's dream contains no reference to time in this sense.

In many ways Joseph's interpretation is more confusing than the dream itself. The word which has been translated *place* normally means a base or socket and is used in the sense of position only in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 11:20). The words *Pharaoh shall lift up thine head* will be played with several times in the present chapter and allow for at least two crucially different interpretations (see Gen. 40:20,21). Even the interpretations must be understood differently as they apply to different men. Words, as our author knows full well, are meaningful only in relation to the listener. Words can never be said to be true or false apart from the reasonable expectation of what the speaker believes the hearer will understand by his words; and the words may be intended to say different things to different people.

14. BUT REMEMBER ME WHEN IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THEE, AND SHEW KINDNESS, I PRAY THEE, UNTO ME, AND MAKE MENTION OF ME UNTO PHARAOH, AND BRING ME OUT OF THIS HOUSE:
15. FOR INDEED I WAS STOLEN AWAY OUT OF THE LAND OF THE HEBREWS AND HERE ALSO HAVE I DONE NOTHING THAT THEY SHOULD PUT ME INTO THE PIT.

In Joseph's mind time has suddenly disappeared again. The *house*, which is the prison, has suddenly become the *pit* in which his brothers had left him ten years before (Gen. 37:24). When Joseph asks the butler to remember him in good times his own memory goes back to his brothers and to the bad times.

At this point in the story Joseph is presented as being in the same situation Judah had been in at the beginning of Chapter Thirty-eight when he left his brothers, severing all relations. His homeland is suddenly *the land of the Hebrews*, that is to say a land of slaves. In the following chapters we shall see this separation grow and then suddenly collapse.

16. WHEN THE CHIEF BAKER SAW THAT THE INTERPRETATION WAS GOOD, HE SAID UNTO JOSEPH, I ALSO WAS IN MY DREAM, AND, BEHOLD, I HAD THREE WHITE BASKETS ON MY HEAD:
17. AND IN THE UPPERMOST BASKET THERE WAS OF ALL MANNER OF BAKEMEATS FOR PHARAOH; AND THE BIRDS DID EAT THEM OUT OF THE BASKET UPON MY HEAD.
18. AND JOSEPH ANSWERED AND SAID, THIS IS THE INTERPRETATION THEREOF: THE THREE BASKETS ARE THREE DAYS:

19. YET WITHIN THREE DAYS SHALL PHARAOH LIFT UP THINE HEAD FROM OFF THEE, AND SHALL HANG THEE ON A TREE; AND THE BIRDS SHALL EAT THY FLESH FROM OFF THEE.

The *chief baker* had no particular insight into the wisdom of Joseph's interpretation of the butler's dream. When he saw that *the interpretation was good* he saw nothing more than the happy ending. With Pharaoh things will be different. He will have to be convinced of the wisdom of Joseph's interpretation.

The dream itself is quite vague. It comes to the baker as a whole and has no manifest reference to time in the sense that the butler's dream had and that Pharaoh's dream will have. It could also be a very misleading dream. The word which we have translated *white* is a peculiar word whose meaning is unclear. It could as well have come from a root meaning *hole* and indeed, some translators take it in that sense. In addition, it could have come from the Hebrew word for *freedom*, and a less apt interpreter could have easily been misled into believing that the dream portended the baker's ultimate freedom. The baker is not a very good dreamer. His dreams are unclear and lack any feeling for time.

At the beginning of the story we were told nothing more than that both men had sinned. Whatever was said of one was said of the other. They had dreamed but a single dream, and in each case the dream meant the same thing: *within three days Pharaoh shall lift up thine head*. Suddenly, the two become totally different. When Joseph adds the words *from off thee* he means that one will be returned to his place of honor, the other hung.

What made these men who seemed almost to be one so different? The butler's dream itself was a playing with time. In a vague and subliminal way the butler shared with Joseph his understanding of the importance of time. But dreams touch the heart of man, and this vague but deeply-rooted understanding of time was sufficient to save his life.

Clarity of dreams and a vague awareness of time—how can they save a man's life? And yet Joseph could have seen no other difference between the two men. To see the whole force of Joseph's interpretation and its relation to the dream as it was understood by the dreamer we must reflect on our own activity as interpreters of the Book of Genesis and its relation to that large mass of people—great and small—for whom the book was written. Was it thought by the author that all the men, women, and children whose lives were to be guided by this book would follow the intricacies of dates and the history of each city? Probably not. How then are we to understand the relation of his deepest thoughts to that mass of people for whom he is writing? While not every one of the Children of Israel need be aware of the deepest understanding of tradition they, like the butler, must have a vague reflection of that awareness, deep in their hearts. If the New Way is to succeed, that alone will save their lives.

20. AND IT CAME TO PASS THE THIRD DAY, WHICH WAS PHARAOH'S BIRTHDAY, THAT HE MADE A FEAST UNTO ALL HIS SERVANTS: AND HE LIFTED UP THE HEAD OF THE CHIEF BUTLER AND OF THE CHIEF BAKER AMONG HIS SERVANTS.
21. AND HE RESTORED THE CHIEF BUTLER UNTO HIS BUTLERSHIP AGAIN; AND HE GAVE THE CUP INTO PHARAOH'S HAND:
22. BUT HE HANGED THE CHIEF BAKER; AS JOSEPH HAD INTERPRETED TO THEM.
23. YET DID NOT THE CHIEF BUTLER REMEMBER JOSEPH, BUT FORGAT HIM.

Verse Twenty-three appears to show deep ingratitude on the part of the butler. Verse Fourteen had read as follows: *But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house* (Gen. 40:14). The word which has been translated *make mention of* literally means *cause me to be remembered*, but memory cannot play a role if there is no forgetting. When Joseph says *when it shall be well with thee* he knows that the butler will forget him but that when the right opportunity arises the conditions themselves will bring Joseph to mind. Presumably Joseph's trust in the butler is based on his awareness that the butler is a solid dreamer.

CHAPTER XLI

1. AND IT CAME TO PASS AT THE END OF TWO FULL YEARS, THAT PHARAOH DREAMED: AND, BEHOLD, HE STOOD BY THE RIVER.
2. AND, BEHOLD, THERE CAME UP OUT OF THE RIVER SEVEN WELL FAVOURED KINE AND FATFLESHED; AND THEY FED IN A MEADOW.
3. AND, BEHOLD, SEVEN OTHER KINE CAME UP AFTER THEM OUT OF THE RIVER, ILL FAVOURED AND LEANFLESHED: AND STOOD BY THE OTHER KINE UPON THE BRINK OF THE RIVER.
4. AND THE ILL FAVOURED AND LEANFLESHED KINE DID EAT UP THE SEVEN WELL FAVOURED AND FAT KINE. SO PHARAOH AWOKE.
5. AND HE SLEPT AND DREAMED THE SECOND TIME: AND, BEHOLD, SEVEN EARS OF CORN CAME UP UPON ONE STALK, RANK AND GOOD.
6. AND, BEHOLD, SEVEN THIN EARS AND BLASTED WITH THE EAST WIND SPRUNG UP AFTER THEM.
7. AND THE SEVEN THIN EARS DEVOURED THE SEVEN RANK AND FULL EARS. AND PHARAOH AWOKE, AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS A DREAM.

The word translated *river* is a peculiar word which is used in the Bible exclusively for the Nile and may even have been an Egyptian word. This fact alone is a key to interpreting a good part of the meaning of Pharaoh's dream.

As is commonly known, it never rains in Egypt. If the waters come up at the right time, Egypt prospers; but if the waters fail to rise or rise only a little, the crops fail and Egypt is desolated. The whole of Egyptian well-being depends upon what comes up out of the Nile River. The dream also shows an awareness of time. The order in which the cows or the ears of corn come up is the most crucial part of the dream. Pharaoh's dream also shares the clarity of the butler's dream in another sense. The cows, as well as standing for years, stand for real cows which will be fat for seven years and lean for seven years, just as the butler will actually give a glass of wine to Pharaoh. The baker's dream does not share this clarity. The cakes which the birds eat are no more than vague symbols easily misinterpreted.

The present commentator is somewhat confused by the last phrase of Verse Seven, perhaps because he does not have a fine enough feeling for the Hebrew language. The words *and, behold, it was a dream* may have been intended to imply that the imagery was so sharp that in spite of the strange things that had been going on, Pharaoh took his experience as real life until he awoke. The other interpretation would be his realization that a very important thing had happened to him—he had had a dream. Perhaps the reader with a more subtle knowledge of Hebrew can decide the point.

8. AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE MORNING THAT HIS SPIRIT WAS TROUBLED;
AND HE SENT AND CALLED FOR ALL THE MAGICIANS OF EGYPT, AND ALL THE
WISE MEN THEREOF: AND PHARAOH TOLD THEM HIS DREAM: BUT THERE WAS
NONE THAT COULD INTERPRET THEM TO PHARAOH.

Pharaoh was troubled by his dream. He was vaguely aware of its significance but unable to articulate it fully. In at least one critical sense he was more aware of the solution than either the *wise men* or the *magicians*. *Pharaoh told them his dream*: Pharaoh considered the whole incident as containing one dream. But they were unable to interpret *them*. Pharaoh saw the unity of the dream even though it was separated by time. In that sense he was more aware of the Biblical notion of time than the *wise men* and *magicians* who considered them two different dreams because they were separated by time.

9. THEN SPAKE THE CHIEF BUTLER UNTO PHARAOH. SAYING, I MUST CAUSE MY
FAULTS TO BE REMEMBERED THIS DAY.
10. PHARAOH WAS WROTH WITH HIS SERVANTS. AND PUT ME IN WARD IN THE
CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD'S HOUSE, BOTH ME AND THE CHIEF BAKER:

Almost without thinking, the chief butler has fulfilled his obligation to Joseph. At the end of the last chapter when he was released from prison the butler *forgot* Joseph. But the memory of a good man has a way of working by itself, and now that the times are ripe Joseph came back into his mind.

11. AND WE DREAMED A DREAM IN ONE NIGHT, I AND HE: WE DREAMED EACH MAN ACCORDING TO THE INTERPRETATION OF HIS DREAM.
12. AND THERE WAS THERE WITH US A YOUNG MAN, AN HEBREW, SERVANT TO THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD: AND WE TOLD HIM, AND HE INTERPRETED TO US OUR DREAMS: TO EACH MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DREAM HE DID INTERPRET.
13. AND IT CAME TO PASS, AS HE INTERPRETED TO US, SO IT WAS; ME HE RESTORED UNTO MINE OFFICE, AND HIM HE HANGED.

The butler repeats the words which point to the ambiguity in the number of dreams. The butler seems to have been sensitive to the problem at least in a passive way.

14. THEN PHARAOH SENT AND CALLED JOSEPH, AND THEY BROUGHT HIM HASTILY OUT OF THE PIT: AND HE SHAVED HIMSELF, AND CHANGED HIS RAIMENT AND CAME IN UNTO PHARAOH.

In a strange way time has collapsed again. It was not Pharaoh's men but his brothers who had put him in a *pit*, and Joseph was taken out as if he were being directly delivered from the hands of his brothers (see commentary to Gen. 40:15).

Joseph shaved and put on new clothes. We must remember that because of the collapse of time he was nearly naked, since he lost his clothes. His coat of many colors was taken by his brothers and his outer garment had been grabbed by Potiphar's wife. New clothes are often used as a Biblical symbol for change of the inner man. On their return to Beth-el, Jacob's family buried their gods and changed their clothes (see Gen. 35:2 and commentary). We have already discussed the great rise in David's character when he changed his clothes after the death of his first son, whom he had mourned while the child was still alive and suffering. David's willingness to face life again was symbolized by his outward change (see II Sam. 12:20 and commentary to Gen. 23:1). When the Children of Israel were about to receive the Law and to enter into the New Way they also changed their clothes (Ex. 19:10,14).

Shaving, however, is not part of the New Way. David is described as having a beard (I Sam. 21:14), and his servants were so scandalized when they were shaved by the enemy that they went to Jericho, which then lay in desolation, until their beards grew back (II Sam. 10:4,5). Even rounding the corners of the beard was against the law of Moses (Lev. 19:27). Shaving is only mentioned as being sometimes necessary in the case of leprosy (Lev. 13:29).

Joseph shaved, and now wears Egyptian clothing.

15. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JOSEPH, I HAVE DREAMED A DREAM, AND THERE IS NONE THAT CAN INTERPRET IT: AND I HAVE HEARD SAY OF THEE, THAT THOU CANST UNDERSTAND A DREAM TO INTERPRET IT.

16. AND JOSEPH ANSWERED PHARAOH, SAYING, APART FROM ME, ONLY GOD SHALL GIVE PHARAOH AN ANSWER OF PEACE.

The meaning of the original text is unclear. It contains a rather infrequently used word which different translators take in different ways. The men of King James translate: *It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.* Our translation, which follows an early translation into Aramaic by Jonathan Ben Uziel, is more in conformity with the connotations of the word as it appears in Verse Forty-four of this chapter. At that point the King James version reads: *without thee shall no man lift.* . . .

17. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JOSEPH, IN MY DREAM, BEHOLD, I STOOD UPON THE BANK OF THE RIVER:

18. AND, BEHOLD, THERE CAME UP OUT OF THE RIVER SEVEN KINE, FAT-FLESHED AND WELL FAVOURED; AND THEY FED IN A MEADOW;

19. AND, BEHOLD, SEVEN OTHER KINE CAME UP AFTER THEM, POOR AND VERY ILL FAVOURED AND LEANFLESHED, SUCH AS I NEVER SAW IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT FOR BADNESS:

20. AND THE LEAN AND THE ILL FAVOURED KINE DID EAT UP THE FIRST SEVEN FAT KINE.

21. AND WHEN THEY HAD EATEN THEM UP, IT COULD NOT BE KNOWN THAT THEY HAD EATEN THEM: BUT THEY WERE STILL ILL FAVOURED, AS AT THE BEGINNING. SO I AWOKE.

22. AND I WAS IN MY DREAM, AND BEHOLD, SEVEN EARS CAME UP IN ONE STALK, FULL AND GOOD.

23. AND, BEHOLD, SEVEN EARS, WITHERED, THIN, AND BLASTED WITH THE EAST WIND, SPRUNG UP AFTER THEM:

24. AND THE THIN EARS DEVoured THE SEVEN GOOD EARS: AND I TOLD THIS UNTO THE MAGICIANS; BUT THERE WAS NONE THAT COULD DECLARE IT TO ME.

Pharaoh's account of his dream is fuller than the account given by the author in Verses One through Seven. Pharaoh not only noted important results, namely that the lean cows grew no fatter, but he also connected it with the land of Egypt.

25. AND JOSEPH SAID UNTO PHARAOH, THE DREAM OF PHARAOH IS ONE: GOD HATH SHEWED PHARAOH WHAT HE IS ABOUT TO DO.

26. THE SEVEN GOOD KINE ARE SEVEN YEARS; AND THE SEVEN GOOD EARS ARE SEVEN YEARS: THE DREAM IS ONE.

27. AND THE SEVEN THIN AND ILL FAVOURED KINE THAT CAME UP AFTER THEM ARE SEVEN YEARS: AND THE SEVEN EMPTY EARS BLASTED WITH THE EAST WIND SHALL BE SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE.

28. THIS IS THE THING WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO PHARAOH: WHAT GOD IS ABOUT TO DO HE SHEWETH UNTO PHARAOH.
29. BEHOLD, THERE COME SEVEN YEARS OF GREAT PLENTY THROUGHOUT ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT:
30. AND THERE SHALL ARISE AFTER THEM SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE; AND ALL THE PLENTY SHALL BE FORGOTTEN IN THE LAND OF EGYPT; AND THE FAMINE SHALL CONSUME THE LAND.
31. AND THE PLENTY SHALL NOT BE KNOWN IN THE LAND BY REASON OF THAT FAMINE FOLLOWING; FOR IT SHALL BE VERY GRIEVOUS.
32. AND FOR THAT THE DREAM WAS DOUBLED UNTO PHARAOH TWICE; IT IS BECAUSE THE THING IS ESTABLISHED BY GOD, AND GOD WILL SHORTLY BRING IT TO PASS.

Joseph's interpretation of the dream again turns on his insight into its relationship to time. That is made particularly clear in Verse Twenty-six. For our comments on the particulars of the dream and its singular clarity see the commentary to Gen. 41:1.

33. NOW THEREFORE LET PHARAOH LOOK OUT A MAN DISCREET AND WISE, AND SET HIM OVER THE LAND OF EGYPT.
34. LET PHARAOH DO THIS, AND LET HIM APPOINT OFFICERS OVER THE LAND, AND TAKE UP THE FIFTH PART OF THE LAND OF EGYPT IN THE SEVEN PLENTIOUS YEARS.
35. AND LET THEM GATHER ALL THE FOOD OF THOSE GOOD YEARS THAT COME, AND LAY UP CORN UNDER THE HAND OF PHARAOH, AND LET THEM KEEP FOOD IN THE CITIES.
36. AND THAT FOOD SHALL BE FOR STORE TO THE LAND AGAINST THE SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE, WHICH SHALL BE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT; THAT THE LAND PERISH NOT THROUGH THE FAMINE.

At this point a certain distinction emerges between the teachings of our author and the teachings of the wise men of Greece. The notion of tradition and in particular its deepest manifestation in the sense of the *face of God* appears to have a clear relationship to *Moirai*, or *Fate*, as it appears in Greek tragedy. In order to draw the distinctions we shall have to say something more about the notion of fate as it appears in the Greek tragedies and its relation to *nature* as that word is understood by Plato and Aristotle.

Only heroes have fates. Nothing in their lives is accidental, and their honor comes from the way in which they meet the inevitable. Men, as we know them from daily experience, do not have fates in the tragic sense of the word. However, our random lives can be made intelligible by seeing them as a reflection of the life of a hero who lives according to the way things are essentially. In this sense the hero is a living, breathing *eidōs*. But the Bible seems to reject the notion that the most important factor in understanding men is to understand that

which is everywhere and always. Man, like the fish, requires a blessing because his character depends more on tradition and individual ways than it does on the unchangeable. By establishing new ways Joseph can mitigate the fate which the dream portends in a way which Oedipus could not. But the Biblical author does not believe in a magic lamp. Joseph will invite his brothers to stay in Egypt for five years, and those five years will stretch out into centuries of servitude. The author is aware of the great difficulties there will be in establishing the state and that it will last no more than those same four hundred years (see commentary to Gen. 37:30). The distinction between our two parents, Jerusalem and Athens, has once more come to the surface only to disappear again in front of our eyes.

37. AND THE THING WAS GOOD IN THE EYES OF PHARAOH, AND IN THE EYES OF ALL HIS SERVANTS.

It is hard to do much more than to repeat Abrabanel's argument at this point since it is probably one of the finest insights into the nature of prophecy and dreams that has been written. Abrabanel begins by posing the following question. Why does Pharaoh find Joseph's interpretation so compelling? In part, one could argue that its closeness to the text is one of the compelling factors, but that does not seem sufficient to account for the great investment which Pharaoh makes on the strength of the interpretation. Abrabanel argues that since Pharaoh himself was the dreamer the full meaning of the dream must have been in him, somewhat the way in which things that we have forgotten are in us. Pharaoh's acceptance of the dream was like a recognition. It was like the action of a man who has been reminded of something that he once knew, and the conviction comes not in the reminder but from his own memory. That is the essence of Abrabanel's argument.²

In order to see more clearly the distinction between Abrabanel and Freud, who seems to be saying very much the same thing, we should begin by thinking somewhat about thought. Thought is very different from speech. One sees a red-roofed house with blue shutters and a vine creeping up the side. Though one does not see the red before the roof or the vine before the creeping, speech forces us to destroy the inarticulate whole. There is a sense in which this is not true of the words of a prophet. One day the Lord said to Jeremiah *What seest thou?* And he said, *I see a rod of an almond tree.* And the Lord said, *Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it* (see Jer. 1:11,12).

Now the Hebrew word *hasten* is the same as the word *almond*. In the symbol of the almond Jeremiah saw at once the summation of all of the political alliances and passions which filled his time. Babylon was about to attack and the king wanted to join forces with Egypt in an attempt to withstand the attack. Jeremiah could not have helped knowing that the people were weak, that Egypt

2. Abrabanel, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 259-64.

had just lost many battles and could not be relied upon, and that for the moment, at least, Babylon was in control. He surely knew all the facts and dates as any modern news analyst would, and yet suddenly all those things were gone from his mind and he could see only the almond tree warning him. Perhaps he had never collected all the data as a journalist would have. But it was all summed up in the almond tree.

The conscious thought of most men usually centers around their own needs and desires. But there are times when some men reflect upon a larger whole. It's hard to say where wonder comes from. Men see the beginnings of a pattern—an ordered world which doesn't quite fit together—and they begin to search for the missing pieces. Neither absolute order nor absolute chaos can be the grounds of a question. The fragments of the political situation began to form a whole in Jeremiah's thought, and they revealed themselves in the form of the almond tree. The way in which the imagination summed up these elements into the almond tree is close to the activity of dreaming.

Dreams, according to modern psychology, are an expression of our unstated desires. The thoughts which compose them are as involved as most of our conscious thought, if not more so. But if that is correct and our own middle terms are hidden from ourselves, then our concern for the whole may lead us to dream about the whole in ways that draw the conclusion from the things we know by means of those powers with which we form dreams.

True prophets are those men whose serious concern is with the whole, though they may not be fully conscious of the ways in which their fragmented insights and thoughts join together the bits of knowledge they have about the political situation to form a whole.

While most of us are concerned with our own daily needs and petty desires, both consciously and unconsciously, other men seem to exhibit a genuine concern for a greater whole which pervades their thoughts and even their dreams. But men differ, and it sometimes happens that their pettiest of needs appear to them as having cosmic significance. These are the men whom the Bible knows as the false prophets.

Unconscious thought is not magical. It can err as easily as can any other thought, as happened in the case of the *man of God* who predicted the coming of Josiah and the destruction of the altar at Beth-el. There are, as well, those men who are capable of articulating their concern for the whole in human speech. They are sometimes called philosophers.

This distinction, though expressed in other words, was not unknown to the author. In the commentary to Gen. 20:7 we tried to show the radical distinction he made between Moses and the prophets. He emphasized the fact that the prophets were taught through dreams but that Moses saw the world with clarity. Presumably, our author, who never speaks of his own work as a work of revelation, did not regard himself as a prophet either. In his case that would mean a fully conscious awareness of the use of symbols—that when he wrote

Joshua's curse he was thinking about the death of Zedekiah in the same terms in which we have tried.

But in these chapters the dreamers were only vaguely aware of what was in store for them. Pharaoh and the butler, however, shared a deep-seated feeling about the nature of time and thought which the baker lacked.

38. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO HIS SERVANTS, CAN WE FIND SUCH A ONE AS THIS IS, A MAN IN WHOM THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS?
 39. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JOSEPH, FORASMUCH AS GOD HATH SHEWED THEE ALL THIS, THERE IS NONE SO DISCREET AND WISE AS THOU ART:
 40. THOU SHALT BE OVER MY HOUSE, AND ACCORDING UNTO THY WORD SHALL ALL MY PEOPLE BE RULED: ONLY IN THE THRONE WILL I BE GREATER THAN THOU.
 41. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JOSEPH, SEE I HAVE SET THEE OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.
 42. AND PHARAOH TOOK OFF HIS RING FROM HIS HAND, AND PUT IT UPON JOSEPH'S HAND, AND ARRAYED HIM IN VESTURES OF FINE LINEN, AND PUT A GOLD CHAIN AROUND HIS NECK;

We should begin by considering Pharaoh's actions as two separate actions. He recognized the truth of Joseph's interpretation and also made him ruler. These two parts of Pharaoh's act reflect the two parts of Joseph's act. He had both interpreted the dream and given solid political advice concerning the best way of meeting the situation. However, one of the still unanswered questions is whether the text would distinguish between political wisdom and wisdom, simply.

43. AND HE MADE HIM TO RIDE IN THE SECOND CHARIOT WHICH HE HAD: AND THEY CRIED BEFORE HIM, BOW THE KNEE: AND HE MADE HIM RULER OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.

The history of chariots within the books sheds a great deal of light on the present verse. In Genesis, Joseph will use his chariot twice—once when he goes out to greet his father (Gen. 46:29) and again when he takes his father's body back to Canaan (Gen. 50:9).

Chariots will form the main force of Pharaoh's army four hundred years later when the Children of Israel escape via the Sea of Reeds. Moses and his people will, at that time, pass through the sea unharmed, and Pharaoh's chariots will be drowned (Ex. 14:28). Part of Moses' final speech to his people will exhort them not to fear horses and chariots for they will be able to possess the land even without their help.

The chariots finally appear during the time of Joshua when Israel was engaged in battle with Hazor. Joshua's men conquered the chariots, and they were all burnt by fire at his command (see Josh. 11:9).

Later in the book, when the men of Ephraim and Manasseh complained that the lands given them were too small, Joshua told them they were free to conquer the mountain territories and assured them that they could be victorious in spite of the iron chariots which the Canaanites had (see Josh. 17:16–18). Though that battle is never described, it must be inferred that they were victorious, since from that point on the Bible often mentions the *mountains of Ephraim*.

On the plains, however, chariots posed a greater threat. The Book of Judges began in a politically idealistic time when there was no leader and each man acted as part of the whole. There was to have been a loose federation of tribes united only by God and by the Jubilee Year, but Judah and Simeon, who by that time had banded together, were unable to conquer the iron chariots (Judg. 1:19). These foreign monsters also played their role in the loss of individual freedom and the rise of kingship. The iron chariots were finally conquered only after Israel had been forced to give up that understanding of freedom and lived under the judgeship of Deborah (Judg. 4:3,13,15).

When the people demanded that Samuel give them a king, one of the ways in which he tried to dissuade them was to warn them that a king would take their sons to be charioteers (I Sam. 8:11,12). King Saul, for all his faults, was able to hold his own against the Philistines without the use of horses and chariots. But the last his eyes saw of life was a mass of chariots following hard upon him in the field (II Sam. 1:6). Saul died, but chariots had come to stay.

Early in his career David conquered a thousand chariots. But after having seen Saul's defeat he decided not to follow the example of Joshua. Although he burned most of the chariots, he reserved one hundred for his own use (II Sam. 8:4).

Ultimately these chariots caused more harm than good. They were used in displays by both Absalom and Adonijah when they called the people together in order to form their insurrections (II Sam. 15:1 and I Kings 1:5).

Under the reign of King Solomon chariots came into their own. He sanctified the forbidden objects by using the form of the chariot as the base of the sacred sea or lavabo which stood in front of the Temple (I Kings 7:33). Two chapters later he fulfilled Samuel's prophecy by making chariots a permanent part of the army (I Kings 9:19,22).

Chariots played a role in the Syrian wars which continually ravaged the land (I Kings 20:1–33). However, at the end of the battle Jehoshaphat, who was on foot, escaped, while Ahab, who rode in a chariot, was captured and killed.

And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his

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blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the Lord which He spake. (I Kings 22:35–38)

Chariots were almost laughed at in the Battle Which Wasn't when Elisha threw a fog around the Syrian army (II Kings 6:15), and again when Elisha frightened the Syrian army with the noises of horses and chariots (II Kings 7:6).

The last time that a chariot is mentioned by the author is when he speaks of the statue of a chariot which the kings of Judah had set up as a gift to the sun-god. In his final resurrection of the state Josiah burnt those chariots as Joshua had done when he first entered the land (II Kings 23:11 and Josh. 11:9). This return to the beginning seems to be the author's final reflections on chariots, but Joseph now rides in a chariot.

44. AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO JOSEPH, I AM PHARAOH, AND WITHOUT THEE SHALL NO MAN LIFT UP HIS HAND OR FOOT IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.

45. AND PHARAOH CALLED JOSEPH'S NAME ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH; AND HE GAVE HIM TO WIFE ASENATH THE DAUGHTER OF POTI-PHERAH PRIEST OF ON. AND JOSEPH WENT OUT OVER ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.

Joseph's rule in Egypt was total. He rode in an Egyptian chariot and was married to the daughter of an Egyptian priest. The city, On, sometimes called Hilliapolis, was dedicated to the worship of the sun. It almost looks as though Joseph were riding in the chariots which Josiah tore down. Later on in this chapter it will become clear that Joseph has completely abandoned the home of his fathers and thinks of himself only as an Egyptian (see Gen. 41:51).

According to modern scholars Joseph's new name is Egyptian for *creator of life*.

46. AND JOSEPH WAS THIRTY YEARS OLD WHEN HE STOOD BEFORE PHARAOH KING OF EGYPT. AND JOSEPH WENT DOWN FROM THE PRESENCE OF PHARAOH. AND WENT THROUGHOUT THE LAND OF EGYPT.

47. AND IN THE SEVEN PLENTEOUS YEARS THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH BY HANDFULS.

48. AND HE GATHERED UP ALL THE FOOD OF THE SEVEN YEARS, WHICH WERE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, AND LAID UP THE FOOD IN THE CITIES: THE FOOD OF THE FIELD, WHICH WAS ROUND ABOUT EVERY CITY, LAID HE UP IN THE SAME.

49. AND JOSEPH GATHERED CORN AS THE SAND OF THE SEA, VERY MUCH. UNTIL HE LEFT NUMBERING: FOR IT WAS WITHOUT NUMBER.

Apparently, Joseph seems to have decided to play a much firmer role than the one he had outlined to Pharaoh. Instead of collecting one-fifth of the food, his new plan called for collecting all of the food and rationing it from the beginning of the seven years of plenty. Clearly the first plan would have been insufficient since it would not have even provided enough food for two years.

50. AND UNTO JOSEPH WERE BORN TWO SONS BEFORE THE YEARS OF FAMINE CAME, WHICH ASENATH THE DAUGHTER OF POTI-PHERAH PRIEST OF ON BARE UNTO HIM.
51. AND JOSEPH CALLED THE NAME OF THE FIRSTBORN MANASSEH; FOR GOD, SAID HE, HATH MADE ME FORGET ALL MY TOIL, AND ALL MY FATHER'S HOUSE.
52. AND THE NAME OF THE SECOND CALLED HE EPHRAIM: FOR GOD HATH CAUSED ME TO BE FRUITFUL IN THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION.

Joseph's break with the past has become total. His first son's name implies that he has completely forgotten his brothers. But forgetting, in the case of Joseph, has two sides. He had a duty towards his homeland, but he also had ample reason to hate it. At this point in Joseph's life there is neither duty nor hatred. There is only the new life which he is thinking about in Verse Fifty-two.

53. AND THE SEVEN YEARS OF PLENTIOUSNESS, THAT WAS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT, WERE ENDED.
54. AND THE SEVEN YEARS OF DEARTH BEGAN TO COME, ACCORDING AS JOSEPH HAD SAID; AND THE DEARTH WAS IN ALL LANDS; BUT IN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT THERE WAS BREAD.
55. AND WHEN ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT WAS FAMISHED, THE PEOPLE CRIED TO PHARAOH FOR BREAD: AND PHARAOH SAID UNTO ALL THE EGYPTIANS, GO UNTO JOSEPH; WHAT HE SAITH TO YOU, DO.

After the birth of Joseph's sons, the years of hardship came, and the Egyptians complained to Pharaoh with the same words that the Children of Israel will use when they address Moses in the desert. Unlike Pharaoh, Moses was unable to send the people directly to God but had to remain as mediator.

56. AND THE FAMINE WAS OVER ALL THE FACE OF THE EARTH: AND JOSEPH OPENED ALL THE STOREHOUSES, AND SOLD UNTO THE EGYPTIANS; AND THE FAMINE WAXED SORE IN THE LAND OF EGYPT.
57. AND ALL THE COUNTRIES CAME INTO EGYPT TO JOSEPH FOR TO BUY CORN; BECAUSE THAT THE FAMINE WAS SO SORE IN ALL LANDS.

Joseph had provided well for his people, and in a strange way one has the image of the prophet vision when all men shall come to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XLII

1. NOW WHEN JACOB SAW THAT THERE WAS CORN IN EGYPT, JACOB SAID UNTO HIS SONS, WHY DO YE LOOK ONE UPON ANOTHER?
2. AND HE SAID, BEHOLD, I HAVE HEARD THAT THERE IS CORN IN EGYPT: GET YOU DOWN THITHER. AND BUY FOR US FROM THENCE; THAT WE MAY LIVE, AND NOT DIE.

Famine is one of the great moving forces in the book. It causes vast migrations in the most literal sense of the word. As we shall see later, the other moving force is food. Thus far in the book famine has caused Abraham to go into Egypt (Gen. 12:10) and Isaac to migrate in that same direction even though he went only as far as Gerar, the home of King Abimelech (Gen. 26:1), and now it will send Jacob and all his sons into a strange world from which they themselves will never return alive. When their children finally leave Egypt four hundred years later the famine will still be out there in the desert waiting for them, and they will only learn to live with it when they have learned to live with themselves.

The new state was to have joy as its principle characteristic. This joy in serving God was based primarily on the internal relationships which culminated in the celebration of the Jubilee Year (see commentary to Gen. 15:9). Moses' warning, contrasting their service to God with foreign domination, reads as follows:

Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in famine, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and He shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until He have destroyed thee. (Deut. 28:47,48)

The word *famine* next occurs in Hannah's prayer, which ends with longing for a king (see I Sam. 2:1-10 and commentary to Gen. 20:7). But even before Hannah's prayer there had been a famine in the days of the Judges which sent Elimelech and Naomi to Moab and prepared the answer to Hannah's prayer by the birth of David's great-grandfather, Obed (see Ruth 1:1, 4:23, and the commentary to Gen. 19:31).

Famine was one of the choices open to David as a punishment for the sins of Saul against the Gibeonites. Though David chose blight, famine occurred at the end of his reign because he insisted upon taking a census in spite of Joab's warning (see II Sam. 24:13 and the commentary to Gen. 23:1).

In his great prayer, which not only serves as a paradigm for all prayers but which contains some of the deepest reflections on the nature of prayer itself, King Solomon again warned the people of famine, that unseen enemy whom no arrow could slay (I Kings 8:37-39). There were famines again in the days of Ahab and Elisha, but the great famine came under the reign of King Zedekiah when all was lost and the people taken into Babylon.

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. (II Kings 25:1-3)

The final collapse of the state was accompanied by famine—the famine of which Moses had spoken.

From Abraham to Zedekiah famine was the goad which continually pushed the people on; from Canaan to Egypt and back to Canaan, from Canaan to Moab and back with the seed of a king, and finally it pushed them into the great world.

3. AND JOSEPH'S TEN BRETHREN WENT DOWN TO BUY CORN IN EGYPT.

The author stresses the fact that *ten* brothers went down into Egypt. His emphasis on the number *ten* was not meant as an introduction to the following verse in which we are told that Benjamin did not go with his brothers. Actually, the stress is intended to be understood in opposition to the number *Nine*. In other words the author subtly wishes to remind us that Judah has returned to his brothers and has found a proper role for himself among them. The reason why the author did not wish to mention Judah explicitly will become clear in the commentary to Gen. 43:2.

4. BUT BENJAMIN, JOSEPH'S BROTHER, JACOB SENT NOT WITH HIS BRETHREN; FOR HE SAID, LEST PERADVENTURE MISCHIEF BEFALL HIM.

In reading this verse we must bear in mind that Jacob is still under the impression that Joseph was murdered by his brothers. Apparently he does not wish to give them the opportunity of dealing with Benjamin in the same manner since Benjamin, in his eyes, has taken Joseph's place.

5. AND THE SONS OF ISRAEL CAME TO BUY CORN AMONG THOSE THAT CAME: FOR THE FAMINE WAS IN THE LAND OF CANAAN.

6. AND JOSEPH WAS THE GOVERNOR OVER THE LAND, AND HE IT WAS THAT SOLD TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND: AND JOSEPH'S BRETHREN CAME, AND BOWED DOWN THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM WITH THEIR FACES TO THE EARTH.

7. AND JOSEPH SAW HIS BRETHREN, AND HE RECOGNIZED THEM, BUT MADE HIMSELF STRANGE UNTO THEM, AND SPAKE ROUGHLY UNTO THEM; AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, WHENCE COME YE? AND THEY SAID, FROM THE LAND OF CANAAN TO BUY FOOD.

Verse Five presents the sons as appearing among the crowds of people which had come from many countries to buy corn. Joseph is the prominent one and they number only ten in a large crowd; yet he can spot them but they do not recognize him.

Verse Seven contains a play on words. The Hebrew words for *recognized* and *he made himself strange* come from homonymic roots. This word, *recognize*, is the word which played such a role in the life of Judah. It was used

when Judah *recognized* his own staff in the hand of Tamar and at the same time *recognized* the wisdom of Jacob. Joseph is now in somewhat the same position in which Judah had been in Chapter Thirty-eight. He has found a new life for himself and has no intention of returning to his brothers. Unlike Judah, his recognition will not cause him to return immediately. In his case relations will become much more complicated, and we shall have to see their development in the next chapters.

Recognition is not necessarily a characteristic of every generation. The word had been used once before in the passage in which Isaac failed to *recognize* Jacob because he was disguised as Esau (Gen. 27:23). Traditions can be passed on through a whole generation even though recognition is not present. However, they become dead if not recognized from time to time.

8. AND JOSEPH KNEW HIS BRETHREN, BUT THEY KNEW NOT HIM.

9. AND JOSEPH REMEMBERED THE DREAMS WHICH HE DREAMED OF THEM, AND SAID UNTO THEM, YE ARE SPIES; TO SEE THE NAKEDNESS OF THE LAND YE ARE COME.

According to Verse Seven Joseph *spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them Whence come ye*. Joseph's speech in Verse Nine is rough language, but according to the text the question posed in Verse Seven is already *rough language*. Even from the outset Joseph tries to get his brothers to remember where they came from and hence who their fathers really were. But Joseph was still of two minds. He accused them of being *spies* who had come to *see the nakedness of the land*, an accusation which he will repeat in Verse Twelve. There were a great many ways in which Joseph could have reacted, and we must try to discover why he accused them of being *spies*.

Joseph's accusation of spying is tantamount to accusing them of wishing to attack Egypt in order to dwell there. At any rate *spies* will be used for this purpose a number of times later in the book (see Num. 21:32; Josh. 2:6; Judg. 18:2; and II Sam. 10:3, 15:10). Ironically, the brothers will ultimately settle for a time in Egypt as if they had been spies.

The term *nakedness* in Hebrew has a somewhat wider meaning than it does in English. Leviticus 18:8, for instance, reads as follows: *The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover; it is thy father's nakedness*. The last part of the sentence means that it is a *nakedness* which it is only proper for the father to see. We have already discussed the notion of nakedness once before in connection with Noah. When Ham uncovered his father's nakedness he did, in an inappropriate way, something very close to the highest human activity so far described in this book. By gazing upon his own origins he *remembered* or *recognized* that which was inappropriate for him to remember.

Joseph's accusation is based on the fact that he, in a way, has become Egypt's *nakedness*. In Egypt the Children of Israel were known as Hebrews,

that is as slaves (see commentary to Gen. 39:11), and as we shall learn in Verse Thirty-two, the Hebrews were thought of as being so lowly that the Egyptians, by law, were forbidden to eat with them. It may be that Joseph, who has begun a new life for himself, fears that his brothers would be in a position to reveal his *nakedness*, that is his origins, and does not yet know whether it is appropriate for them to see it or not.

10. AND THEY SAID UNTO HIM, NAY, MY LORD, BUT TO BUY FOOD ARE THY SERVANTS COME.
11. WE ARE ALL ONE MAN'S SONS: WE ARE TRUE MEN, THY SERVANTS ARE NO SPIES.
12. AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, NAY, BUT TO SEE THE NAKEDNESS OF THE LAND YE ARE COME.
13. AND THEY SAID, THY SERVANTS ARE TWELVE BRETHREN, THE SONS OF ONE MAN IN THE LAND OF CANAAN; AND, BEHOLD, THE YOUNGEST IS THIS DAY WITH OUR FATHER, AND ONE IS NOT.
14. AND JOSEPH SAID UNTO THEM, THAT IS IT THAT I SPAKE UNTO YOU SAYING, YE ARE SPIES:

In Verse Eleven the brothers intend to prove their honesty by telling Joseph that they are brothers. This proof assumes that the sons of one man would not all risk their lives simultaneously because of their care for the family as a whole. But the proof does not satisfy Joseph, who is not certain that they have any care for the family as a whole. His doubts are, of course, based on their earlier actions towards him.

In Verse Thirteen the brothers are suddenly forced to remember the brother whom they had placed into the pit. But it is not clear what it was that reminded them of Joseph. Perhaps it was his voice which brought him to mind. Perhaps the connection between Joseph and the voice of the man who stood before them was made by that part of their minds which allowed Pharaoh to see the solution to his dream even before Joseph interpreted it.

15. HEREBY YE SHALL BE PROVED: BY THE LIFE OF PHARAOH YE SHALL NOT GO FORTH HENCE, EXCEPT YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER COME HITHER.
16. SEND ONE OF YOU, AND LET HIM FETCH YOUR BROTHER, AND YE SHALL BE KEPT IN PRISON, THAT YOUR WORDS MAY BE PROVED, WHETHER THERE BE ANY TRUTH IN YOU: OR ELSE BY THE LIFE OF PHARAOH SURELY YE ARE SPIES.

The test which Joseph has devised is a dangerous one, and yet it seems to be the only one possible. The real question is whether the brothers can be trusted with Benjamin's life. Does Jacob have enough trust in his sons to place Benjamin in the same position in which Joseph himself had been placed thirty years previously? Joseph is taking quite a risk. Even if Jacob should agree, it is not

clear that his sons will pass the test. But since nothing can be accomplished otherwise Joseph has decided to go through with his plan.

17. AND HE PUT THEM ALL TOGETHER INTO WARD THREE DAYS.

Joseph placed his brothers in prison for three days, and they waited. This is not the first time that we have sweated through a period of three days, nor will it be the last. Abraham walked for three days with his son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah, where he would have sacrificed him (Gen. 22:4). There was a three-day journey between Laban's house, in which Jacob was a servant, and the place where he became a magician (Gen. 30:36). Pharaoh's officers waited in jail for three days not knowing whether Joseph's predictions would turn out to be true or not (Gen. 40:12–19). In the future Moses will ask Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go for a three-day journey, taking all of their possessions with them, to sacrifice to their God (Ex. 3:18, 5:3, and 8:23). But Pharaoh will refuse, and there will follow a three-day period of darkness in which nothing can be seen.

After the Children of Israel left Egypt, not knowing what their journey would be like, three days passed before the water ran out (Ex. 15:22). After the death of Moses, Joshua announced a three-day period to prepare for the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land, not knowing what life would be like on the other side (Josh. 1:11, 2:22, and 3:2).

In the time of the Judges there were other similar three-day periods, such as the period Samson gave to the Philistines for solving his riddle, and the time the Levite from Ephraim spent at the home of his father-in-law before the journey which ended so disastrously (Judg. 14:14 and 19:4). Saul spent three aimless days looking for his father's lost she-ass before he found Samuel (I Sam. 9:20).

Three days—they always mark a period of doubt and wonder. They differ from forty and four hundred in that they are always a period of unrest because of the unknown character of the outcome. Similar three-day periods occur twice near the end of the Second Book of Samuel (II Sam. 20:4 and 24:13), but once Solomon becomes king three-day periods never occur again. After the division of the country the end was inevitable.

18. AND JOSEPH SAID UNTO THEM THE THIRD DAY, THIS DO, AND LIVE; FOR I FEAR GOD:

19. IF YE BE TRUE MEN, LET ONE OF YOUR BRETHREN BE BOUND IN THE HOUSE OF YOUR PRISON: GO YE, CARRY CORN FOR THE FAMINE OF YOUR HOUSES:

20. BUT BRING YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER UNTO ME; SO SHALL YOUR WORDS BE VERIFIED, AND YE SHALL NOT DIE. AND THEY DID SO.

At the end of the three-day period Joseph made his decision. This three-day period differs from all others in that Joseph, rather than God or circumstances, makes the decision. His final judgment was twofold. Most of the men will be

returned home. This will provide a means of sending ample provisions to his father and brothers, while providing the brothers with sufficient time for them to reach their own decision about returning to Egypt once they have returned home. By deciding to hold one of them prisoner, Joseph even forces the brothers to accept the test if there is any decency left in them.

In Verse Eighteen Joseph suddenly hints to his brothers about his identity by saying *For I fear God*. While the brothers do not fully understand the hint it seems to have a quiet effect. It, together with the incarceration of Simeon, is sufficient to bring Joseph to mind again in Verse Twenty-one.

21. AND THEY SAID ONE TO ANOTHER, WE ARE VERILY GUILTY CONCERNING OUR BROTHER, IN THAT WE SAW THE ANGUISH OF HIS SOUL, WHEN HE BE- SOUGHT US, AND WE WOULD NOT HEAR; THEREFORE IS THIS DISTRESS COME UPON US.
22. AND REUBEN ANSWERED THEM, SAYING, SPAKE I NOT UNTO YOU, SAYING, DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD; AND YE WOULD NOT HEAR? THEREFORE, BEHOLD, ALSO HIS BLOOD IS REQUIRED.
23. AND THEY KNEW NOT THAT JOSEPH UNDERSTOOD THEM; FOR HE SPAKE UNTO THEM BY AN INTERPRETER.

It is strange how the human mind, the things it knows, the things it does not know, and the things it knows only in a way, interplay and even contradict. Their present thoughts seem to have been called forth by Joseph's indication that he feared the God of the Jews. At the same time they speak freely of their guilt as if Joseph spoke no Hebrew, as Verse Twenty-three points out. This rather insignificant moment is a clear example of how the author views the question of forgetting and of remembering, of seeing and of not seeing, which is characteristic of the book as a whole and upon which the significance of tradition as such is based.

In Verse Twenty-two Reuben apparently is referring to Gen. 37:21, in which he had warned the brothers not to kill Joseph. However, he makes no reference to Gen. 40:1, in which Joseph was taken out of the pit and sold. Nonetheless it is consistent with the belief that Joseph actually was eaten by a wild beast. In this sense the verse tends to substantiate the notion that it was the Midianites who pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites.

After the brothers' confession in Verse Twenty-one Reuben's speech falls flat. Like the words of a child who says "I told you so", they serve no purpose. However, Judah, who will emerge as their spokesman, for the moment remains silent.

24. AND HE TURNED HIMSELF ABOUT FROM THEM, AND WEPT; AND RETURNED TO THEM AGAIN, AND COMMUNED WITH THEM, AND TOOK FROM THEM SIM- EON, AND BOUND HIM BEFORE THEIR EYES.

Joseph's tears are complicated. They contain recognition of his brothers' repentance, but they also contain the necessity for his own return; however, see the commentary to Gen. 45:1 for our remarks on *weeping*. Joseph purposely treated Simeon harshly in front of his brothers in order to impress upon them their duty towards him.

25. THEN JOSEPH COMMANDED TO FILL THEIR SACKS WITH CORN, AND TO RESTORE EVERY MAN'S MONEY INTO HIS SACK, AND TO GIVE THEM PROVISION FOR THE WAY: AND THUS DID HE UNTO THEM.
26. AND THEY LADED THEIR ASSES WITH THE CORN, AND DEPARTED THENCE.
27. AND AS ONE OF THEM OPENED HIS SACK TO GIVE HIS ASS PROVENDER IN THE INN, HE ESPIED HIS MONEY; FOR, BEHOLD, IT WAS IN HIS SACK'S MOUTH.
28. AND HE SAID UNTO HIS BRETHREN, MY MONEY IS RESTORED; AND LO, IT IS EVEN IN MY SACK; AND THEIR HEARTS FAILED THEM, AND THEY WERE AFRAID, SAYING ONE TO ANOTHER, WHAT IS THIS THAT GOD HATH DONE UNTO US?

At this point Joseph begins to work upon his brothers in yet another way which will play a large role in their education. He places them in a strange world. One might even call it a world of miracles, in which money appears from nowhere and in which wild and fantastic things will happen to them. This world will be filled with the kind of delights and torments which give rise to awe. They now believe that God has returned the money, and they are confused, not knowing if it is meant for them or whether they are to be accounted thieves.

29. AND THEY CAME UNTO JACOB THEIR FATHER UNTO THE LAND OF CANAAN, AND TOLD HIM ALL THAT BEFELL UNTO THEM; SAYING,
30. THE MAN, WHO IS THE LORD OF THE LAND, SPAKE ROUGHLY TO US, AND TOOK US FOR SPIES OF THE COUNTRY.
31. AND WE SAID UNTO HIM, WE ARE TRUE MEN; WE ARE NO SPIES:
32. WE BE TWELVE BRETHREN, SONS OF OUR FATHER; ONE IS NOT, AND THE YOUNGEST IS THIS DAY WITH OUR FATHER IN THE LAND OF CANAAN.
33. AND THE MAN, THE LORD OF THE COUNTRY, SAID UNTO US, HEREBY SHALL I KNOW THAT YE ARE TRUE MEN: LEAVE ONE OF YOUR BRETHREN HERE WITH ME, AND TAKE FOOD FOR THE FAMINE OF YOUR HOUSEHOLDS, AND BE GONE:
34. AND BRING YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER UNTO ME: THEN SHALL I KNOW THAT YE ARE NO SPIES, BUT THAT YE ARE TRUE MEN: SO WILL I DELIVER YOU YOUR BROTHER, AND YE SHALL TRAFFICK IN THE LAND.
35. AND IT CAME TO PASS AS THEY EMPTIED THEIR SACKS, BEHOLD, EVERY MAN'S BUNDLE OF MONEY WAS IN HIS SACK: AND WHEN BOTH THEY AND THEIR FATHER SAW THE BUNDLES OF MONEY THEY WERE AFRAID.

The brothers went home full of strange and contradictory tales. *The man spake roughly* and yet provided for their needs. He demanded to see one brother as if he cared, and yet he put another in chains as if he cared not a bit. Jacob even participates in these wonderful things when it is discovered that all the money has been returned.

36. AND JACOB THEIR FATHER SAID UNTO THEM, ME HAVE YE BEREAVED OF MY CHILDREN: JOSEPH IS NOT, AND SIMEON IS NOT, AND YE WILL TAKE BENJAMIN AWAY: ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME.

Jacob is most concerned about his sons. He believes that his sons had killed Joseph and that he himself is guilty. He cannot risk the life of Benjamin even in the hope of saving Simeon, whom he now considers lost forever.

37. AND REUBEN SPAKE UNTO HIS FATHER, SAYING, SLAY MY TWO SONS, IF I BRING HIM NOT TO THEE: DELIVER HIM INTO MY HAND, AND I WILL BRING HIM TO THEE AGAIN.

Well-meaning Reuben has blundered again. His suggestion arises from his true desire to accept the responsibilities laid upon the first-born. But Jacob's whole life has been spent in an attempt to avoid such sacrifices. And while he presently believes himself to have failed, Reuben's offer of further sacrifice could only have sounded grotesque. But throughout the discussion Judah continued to remain silent.

38. AND HE SAID, MY SON SHALL NOT GO DOWN WITH YOU; FOR HIS BROTHER IS DEAD, AND HE IS LEFT ALONE: IF MISCHIEF BEFALL HIM BY THE WAY IN THE WHICH YE GO, THEN SHALL YE BRING DOWN MY GRAY HAIRS WITH SORROW TO SHEOL.

Jacob decides to do nothing. His memory of Joseph's death is too strong, and he can no longer trust his sons.

The end of the verse belongs to a different genre of Biblical writings than the works with which we have been dealing. The word *sheol*, which has more the connotation of the English expression *the bowels of the earth*, is generally a poetic word found often in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah, but it does not appear very often in our books. Jacob had used it once before when he was presented with Joseph's coat (Gen. 37:35), and Judah will use the word once again when he quotes the present verse to Joseph (Gen. 44:29,31).

It will be used once in the Book of Numbers in a literal sense when Korah and the rest of his rebellious followers are swallowed up by a sudden fault in the earth (Num. 16:30,33). David uses the word twice in his last advice to Solomon. In both cases it is a poetical way of telling his son what must be done to old friends for whom there is no longer a place (I Kings 2:6,9).

Finally, the word will appear three times in three different poems. David and Moses will both use the word in the psalms which they sing at the end of their lives, and Hannah will use the word in the prayer which, as it were, begins her life (Deut. 32:22; I Sam. 2:6; and II Sam. 22:6).

As we have had several occasions to mention, the Book of Genesis contains a certain antipoetical strain (see commentary to Gen. 4:23 and 21:7). This is almost the last word on the author's view of poetry, but nonetheless Moses and David both ultimately turn poet. Moses' song is a bitter song sung at the end of his life. It is introduced by the following words:

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands. And Moses spoke in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of the song, until they were ended. (Deut. 31:29,30)

Poetry arises again as the last means by which the soul can be calmed. It is the final refuge of an essentially antipoetical work and as such mirrors Jacob's feeling of resignation.

CHAPTER XLIII

1. AND THE FAMINE WAS SORE IN THE LAND.
2. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN THEY HAD EATEN UP THE CORN WHICH THEY HAD BROUGHT OUT OF EGYPT, THEIR FATHER SAID UNTO THEM, GO AGAIN, BUY US A LITTLE FOOD.

Time and starvation have forced Jacob to send his sons back to Egypt. He imagines himself in front of Joseph begging for *a little food*. The word *little* stresses the humility of his request and at the same time reveals the complex way in which the human mind works. If the grand minister were present, Jacob's humility might persuade him to grant the food, without demanding that Benjamin be brought to Egypt. The figure of the grand minister so impresses itself upon Jacob's mind that he acts as if the minister were present even though Jacob knows that he is far away and that Benjamin must be sent. Jacob is in such distress that his mind breaks in two—one living in the world which is and the other living in the world which should have been.

3. AND JUDAH SPAKE UNTO HIM, SAYING, THE MAN DID SOLEMNLY PROTEST UNTO US, SAYING, YE SHALL NOT SEE MY FACE, EXCEPT YOUR BROTHER BE WITH YOU.
4. IF THOU WILT SEND OUR BROTHER WITH US, WE WILL GO DOWN AND BUY THEE FOOD:
5. BUT IF THOU WILT NOT SEND HIM, WE WILL NOT GO, FOR THE MAN SAID

UNTO US, YE SHALL NOT SEE MY FACE, EXCEPT YOUR BROTHER BE WITH YOU.

Judah finally decides to speak. His words are simple and unmistakably clear. Unlike Reuben he does not begin with a great oath but calmly describes the situation as best he can. In spite of this precision his words are not a direct quotation. The words *Thou shalt not see my face* were never spoken by Joseph himself. But Judah is very insistent upon this point and states it twice. Nonetheless they will be spoken when God addresses Moses (Ex. 33:20). Judah's error is not a simple one for, as we remember well, the problem of seeing *the face of God* is closely connected to the question of whether a man can be trusted with the life of his brother (see commentary to Gen. 32:28).

6. AND ISRAEL SAID, WHEREFORE DEALT YE SO ILL WITH ME, AS TO TELL THE MAN WHETHER YE HAD YET A BROTHER?
7. AND THEY SAID, THE MAN ASKED US STRAITLY OF OUR STATE, AND OF OUR KINDRED, SAYING, IS YOUR FATHER YET ALIVE? HAVE YE ANOTHER BROTHER? AND WE TOLD HIM ACCORDING TO THE TENOR OF THESE WORDS: COULD WE CERTAINLY KNOW THAT HE WOULD SAY, BRING YOUR BROTHER DOWN?

Judah does not answer his father's question but, falling silent, allows his brothers to do so. Their answer is, of course, a lie at least in the superficial sense of the word. They themselves were the first to mention their father and their two other brothers in Verse Thirteen of the last chapter, but in a deeper sense their words turn out to be true. Joseph will use almost the same words which they have attributed to him when he asks them about the welfare of their father in Verse Twenty-seven of the present chapter.

They may be telling the truth in an even more profound way. We have seen that the seeds of recognition are buried deep inside the brothers. Perhaps it does seem to them as if Joseph had in fact asked those questions which must have been on his mind.

8. AND JUDAH SAID UNTO ISRAEL HIS FATHER, SEND THE LAD WITH ME, AND WE WILL ARISE AND GO; THAT WE MAY LIVE, AND NOT DIE, BOTH WE, AND THOU, AND ALSO OUR LITTLE ONES.

Judah ignores the argument and returns to the simple facts at hand. But he does try to shift the grounds of the discussion a bit. The words *that we may live and not die* which he amplified by saying *both we and thou and also our little ones* are a direct quotation from Jacob, who had used them when he sent the brothers to Egypt the first time (Gen. 42:2). In doing so Judah is trying to annul the humility of Verse Two and place the discussion back on the simple and forthright level of the beginning of Chapter Forty-two, in which Jacob sent his sons for food without ceremony.

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9. I WILL BE PLEDGE FOR HIM; OF MY HAND SHALT THOU REQUIRE HIM: IF I BRING HIM NOT UNTO THEE, AND SET HIM BEFORE THEE, THEN LET ME BEAR THE BLAME FOR EVER:

Judah's words are partly directed to Jacob and partly to himself. Insofar as they are directed to Jacob they are intended as a correction of Reuben's rather clumsy statement in Verse Thirty-six of the last chapter. He realizes that pledging his own life is no solution and that the pledge of his own honor is of greater value to his father. To this extent Verse Nine is also addressed to Reuben. Judah and Reuben have one thing in common. They both refused to commit fratricide. But in spite of his refusal Reuben, the elder, proved to be inadequate as a leader. Judah, in his decision to return to his brothers, knew that he would have to take the responsibility of the first-born and that this responsibility, in the mind of the author, will continue even past the days of Josiah.

Reuben and Judah had been the two brothers who refused to commit fratricide. But in this essential respect Judah, insofar as he sees the necessity for replacing his brother, was metaphorically compelled to commit fratricide in a deeper sense. Thus ultimately he was the only one of the brothers to perform the act.

Insofar as the verse is directed to himself, his private thoughts go back to the time he spent with Tamar. When he *pledges* himself in this verse he becomes a replacement for the *bracelet, staff and signet ring* which he gave to Tamar as a *pledge* (Gen. 38:18).

10. FOR EXCEPT WE HAD LINGERED, SURELY NOW WE HAD RETURNED THIS SECOND TIME.

In Verse Ten Judah subtly implies that there is no question but that they should have returned to Egypt immediately in order to save Simeon, as Reuben had argued in Verse Thirty-seven of the last chapter. What Reuben did not see was that speech is of no avail and can barely be said to exist when it cannot be heard. This insight on the part of Judah helps to explain his silence in Chapter Forty-two.

11. AND THEIR FATHER ISRAEL SAID UNTO THEM, IF IT MUST BE SO NOW, DO THIS; TAKE OF THE BEST FRUITS IN THE LAND IN YOUR VESSELS, AND CARRY DOWN THE MAN A PRESENT, A LITTLE BALM, AND A LITTLE HONEY, SPICES, AND MYRRH, NUTS, AND ALMONDS:
12. AND TAKE DOUBLE MONEY IN YOUR HAND; AND THE MONEY THAT WAS BROUGHT AGAIN IN THE MOUTH OF YOUR SACKS, CARRY IT AGAIN IN YOUR HAND; PERADVENTURE IT WAS AN OVERSIGHT:
13. TAKE ALSO YOUR BROTHER, AND ARISE, GO AGAIN UNTO THE MAN:

Israel insists that his sons take a *present* with them. The word for *present* is not often used as a gift given to a human being. It is quite often used in the sense of *tribute*, or a payment given under the force of threat to a foreign conqueror (Judg. 3:15; I Sam. 10:27; II Sam. 8:2,6 and 10:25).

The word is also used in this sense when the last king of Israel paid tribute to Assyria (II Kings 17:3,4). Its final use in the book occurs when King Hezekiah suddenly presents a gift to Berodach-Baladan the King of Babylon, but this *present* only whets his appetite (see commentary to Gen. 38:27).

Aside from the *present* which Jacob gave to Esau (Gen. 32:13–22), the word for *present* is mainly used as an *offering* to God, even in the books of the Bible with which we are dealing. This latter sense is implied in the vast majority of cases in which the word is used, and perhaps is closest to the use in the present verse.

14. AND GOD ALMIGHTY GIVE YOU MERCY BEFORE THE MAN, THAT HE MAY SEND AWAY YOUR OTHER BROTHER, AND BENJAMIN. IF I BE BEREAVED OF MY CHILDREN, I AM BEREAVED.

We have already discussed the meaning of the term *God almighty* in the commentary to Gen. 17:1, where we saw that under this name God protected the very beginnings of his people as they came into contact with the outside world, but there is something strange about its use here since *the man* is their brother.

Unlike his sons, Jacob does not seem to have even a seed of recognition concerning Joseph's identity. His last words are full of despair. He appears to be an old man bowing to the will of fate.

15. AND THE MEN TOOK THAT PRESENT, AND THEY TOOK DOUBLE MONEY IN THEIR HAND, AND BENJAMIN; AND ROSE UP, AND WENT DOWN TO EGYPT, AND STOOD BEFORE JOSEPH.

16. AND WHEN JOSEPH SAW BENJAMIN WITH THEM, HE SAID TO THE STEWARD OF HIS HOUSE, BRING THESE MEN HOME. AND SLAY, AND MAKE READY; FOR THESE MEN SHALL DINE WITH ME AT NOON.

17. AND THE MAN DID AS JOSEPH BADE; AND THE MAN BROUGHT THE MEN INTO JOSEPH'S HOUSE.

18. AND THE MEN WERE AFRAID, BECAUSE THEY WERE BROUGHT INTO JOSEPH'S HOUSE; AND THEY SAID, BECAUSE OF THE MONEY THAT WAS RETURNED IN OUR SACKS AT THE FIRST TIME ARE WE BROUGHT IN; THAT HE MAY SEEK OCCASION AGAINST US, AND FALL UPON US, AND TAKE US FOR BONDMEN, AND OUR ASSES.

Joseph's servant is quick, prompt, and accurate. The complete control that Joseph has over his servants will be stressed on several occasions and will be of some importance.

The brothers are bewildered by this strange invitation. They speak about their fears in terms of their denial of any guilt with respect to the money, but the money itself would not necessarily explain their fears. The slightest irregularity in their lives causes them to think, and thought brings with it feelings of guilt. The guilt centers around the money because they cannot face the true origins of the guilt they feel on account of Joseph.

19. AND THEY CAME NEAR TO THE STEWARD OF JOSEPH'S HOUSE, AND THEY COMMUNED WITH HIM AT THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE,
20. AND SAID, O SIR, WE CAME INDEED DOWN AT THE FIRST TIME TO BUY FOOD:
21. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN WE CAME TO THE INN, THAT WE OPENED OUR SACKS, AND BEHOLD, EVERY MAN'S MONEY WAS IN THE MOUTH OF HIS SACK, OUR MONEY IN FULL WEIGHT: AND WE HAVE BROUGHT IT AGAIN IN OUR HAND.
22. AND THE OTHER MONEY HAVE WE BROUGHT DOWN IN OUR HANDS TO BUY FOOD: WE CANNOT TELL WHO PUT OUR MONEY IN OUR SACKS.
23. AND HE SAID, PEACE BE TO YOU, FEAR NOT: YOUR GOD, AND THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER, HATH GIVEN YOU TREASURE IN YOUR SACKS: I HAD YOUR MONEY. AND HE BROUGHT SIMEON OUT UNTO THEM.

We again begin to see Joseph's magic at work. The ten brothers arrived in Egypt along with all the others who had come much like themselves to buy food. Why should the man invite them to dinner if they were thieves? Why should he even want to see them? Well, they would just have to wait until noon. If their host had greeted them things would have been more straightforward, but as it was, they were given time to think about why they were brought there.

When their fear reached its height the steward spoke kindly to them. Apparently there was never anything to fear, and Simeon was returned. Joseph, who planned the whole, reminds us of Prospero's elegant magic which charmed and cured the souls of men.

The steward, as the instrument of Joseph's magic, knows in what manner the money was returned. He knows that the strange world of pain and delight which has been working on the brothers' minds has all been carefully planned by the man, Joseph. Are there times within the Bible itself when even noble men must lie about God?

24. AND THE MAN BROUGHT THE MEN INTO JOSEPH'S HOUSE, AND GAVE THEM WATER, AND THEY WASHED THEIR FEET; AND HE GAVE THEIR ASSES PROVIDER.
25. AND THEY MADE READY THE PRESENT AGAINST JOSEPH'S COMING AT NOON: FOR THEY HEARD THAT THEY SHOULD EAT BREAD THERE.

26. AND WHEN JOSEPH CAME HOME, THEY BROUGHT HIM THE PRESENT WHICH WAS IN THEIR HAND INTO THE HOUSE AND BOWED THEMSELVES TO HIM TO THE EARTH.
27. AND HE ASKED THEM OF THEIR WELFARE, AND SAID, IS YOUR FATHER WELL, THE OLD MAN OF WHOM YE SPAKE? IS HE YET ALIVE?
28. AND THEY ANSWERED, THY SERVANT OUR FATHER IS IN GOOD HEALTH, HE IS YET ALIVE. AND THEY BOWED DOWN THEIR HEADS, AND MADE OBEISANCE.

The steward and his lord entertain the brothers with all due formality as if their guests had not been placed in bonds and had never been put through the anguish of not knowing what would become of them. For the moment at least they are treated as men by a man. This constant change between anxiety and joy seems to be an integral part of Joseph's magic.

29. AND HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES, AND SAW HIS BROTHER BENJAMIN, HIS MOTHER'S SON, AND SAID, IS THIS YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER, OF WHOM YE SPAKE UNTO ME? AND HE SAID, GOD BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE. MY SON.
30. AND JOSEPH MADE HASTE; FOR HIS BOWELS DID YEARN UPON HIS BROTHER: AND HE SOUGHT WHERE TO WEEP; AND HE ENTERED INTO HIS CHAMBER, AND WEPT THERE.
31. AND HE WASHED HIS FACE, AND WENT OUT, AND REFRAINED HIMSELF, AND SAID, SET ON BREAD.

Human feelings from deep inside Joseph's soul have begun to break through his wizard's mask. At the sight of his brother, Benjamin. Joseph's bag of tricks is suddenly emptied, and he must hide himself in another room.

Verse Thirty-one is written in that same curt style that we saw on several previous occasions. It is no more than a series of short sentences, each containing not more than one or two words. It is the same style in which the author described Abraham's preparation for the sacrifice of Isaac. It describes the automatic actions of a man performing his acts perfectly and precisely because he cannot bring himself to think about them.

32. AND THEY SET ON FOR HIM BY HIMSELF, AND FOR THEM BY THEMSELVES, AND FOR THE EGYPTIANS, WHICH DID EAT WITH HIM, BY THEMSELVES: BECAUSE THE EGYPTIANS MIGHT NOT EAT BREAD WITH THE HEBREWS; FOR THAT IS AN ABOMINATION UNTO THE EGYPTIANS.

Verse Thirty-two raises the gravest problem of the section. Joseph cannot eat with his brothers because an Egyptian cannot eat with a Hebrew, but Joseph's men may not eat with him because an Egyptian cannot eat with a Hebrew. Joseph is both and he is neither. Joseph, the master, teacher, and magi-

cian, eats alone; yet what an ambiguous phrase that is! Like Man he was alone, and we are left to wonder whether that is his greatness or his emptiness.

33. AND THEY SAT BEFORE HIM, THE FIRST BORN ACCORDING TO HIS BIRTH-RIGHT, AND THE YOUNGEST ACCORDING TO HIS YOUTH: AND THE MEN MARVELLED ONE AT ANOTHER.

34. AND HE TOOK AND SENT MESSES UNTO THEM FROM BEFORE HIM: BUT BENJAMIN'S MESS WAS FIVE TIMES SO MUCH AS ANY OF THEIR'S. AND THEY DRANK, AND WERE MERRY WITH HIM.

Joseph's magic seems to have worked its spell. The brothers now live in an enchanted world. They are happy and drink together with their brother Benjamin though his portion is five times greater than their own. They had learned to accept Benjamin in a way in which they could not accept Joseph and his coat of many colors. Their relationship is almost a perfect image of the joys of the Jubilee Year.

In the commentary to Gen. 3:14 we have already given an outline of the role which food and eating play in the Book of Genesis. We are now in a position to review the subject in greater detail.

The subject of *food* first arose in Chapter One when God gave *every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of the tree yielding seed* to man as *food* (Gen. 1:29). The author stresses the fact that only seed-bearing things are good as *food*. Men cannot *eat* rocks or anything else which is part of the earth in the simple sense of the word. Life is almost a substance like a chemical or a vitamin that can pass from one living thing to another. It unifies the whole by making the parts interdependent, but in this early stage only the vegetable kingdom was intended as *food*.

In the commentary to Gen. 2:16 it became clear that from the point of view of Chapter Two, the supremacy of man over the vegetable kingdom could not be understood in the same sense as it had been expressed in Chapter One. The second account of Creation began with a world that had seeds in it already. Man was created merely as the necessary means for allowing the world to express itself. Once man had been created, however, his superiority to that for the sake of which he had been formed became evident, and God planted the Garden for him. The Garden, in this sense, was an afterthought, and though man was too noble for his position in the world, he was insufficiently fit for life in the Garden. When he was split in two because of his loneliness, one of the trees which had been thought proper for him no longer could be *eaten*. The complete interplay between man and the rest of creation had to be limited.

Ultimately man did eat of that tree, and the consequences of that eating again manifested themselves in terms of food. When man ate from the Tree of Knowledge he ingested and became one with a knowledge which was no longer appropriate to him. As a consequence, food was no longer readily available.

Harmony became struggle, and he would have to labor to obtain even that food which was appropriate to him.

Food is next mentioned in connection with the Flood when Noah was made responsible for feeding the animals during the time on the Ark. The unity of the world, which food represented, now appears in a slightly different light. The interdependence which unified and gave completeness to the whole now appears as the weakness and dependence of the part.

After the Flood this slight shift was made even more explicit when man was given the right to *eat* meat. The weakness of the part led to a division of the parts. *Food*, which had been the symbol of unity, now becomes that which divides and brings disharmony, since one part may now *eat* another.

The subject of dependence and independence became more involved after the war of the Five Kings against the Four Kings, when Abraham showed his independence from the Four Kings by refusing their offer of *food*. As we remember, that was a complicated act. Abraham recognized the injustice he would incur if he became obligated to the Four Kings, since he already knew that his descendants would inherit the land of the Four Kings and that the battle which he had fought was his own.

The next time the notion of *food* occurs independence was transformed into magnanimity by the meal which Abraham prepared for the three men who visited his tent.

When Abraham's servant returned to Haran to get a wife for Isaac he showed an even further sensitivity towards the act of *eating*. He refused Laban's offer of *food* until all of the arrangements had been completed, but once that had been done he seemed to have enjoyed his meal. The act of sitting down to eat together became symbolic at this point. But symbols of human feelings become meaningless and even grotesque when that which is symbolized is not present. In this sense the distinction between the proper and improper time for *eating* arises.

Food became a bargaining tool for Jacob, when he used it to buy Esau's birthright, and a way of charming a blessing from his father.

After the dream at Beth-el food became one of the simple things which Jacob required to return to the land of his father. *Food* then becomes the lowest and most fundamental foundation of possibility. It is that without which there could be nothing else.

Food and *eating*, which in the Hebrew language come from the same root, play a many-faceted role in the relationship between Jacob and Laban. Laban was first accused of having *eaten* their money, while Jacob presents himself as having been *eaten* away by cold winters in the service of Laban, but their mutual antagonism was finally concluded when they shared a meal at the monument which they erected.

The thoughtless brothers sat down to a picnic and *ate* their bread not long after they had planned to kill Joseph and claim that a wild beast had *eaten* him.

The importance of *food* as a symbol is next underlined by the author in the three dreams. It is the fundamental symbol in the dreams of the butler, the baker, and Pharaoh himself. In the dreams, *eating* in the double sense of growth and decay almost becomes synonymous with time itself, since time is a process through which.

The significance of *food* and its relation to time and change becomes clear when the brothers are forced by famine to follow Joseph into Egypt. Throughout the rest of the book, famine and *food*, the all-pervasive necessity of mankind on the lowest level, will occasion the most fundamental changes in the book. In the present verse, however, Joseph's magic of food and merriment has conjured up the days of the Jubilee Year. The brothers have forgotten envy and have accepted Joseph.



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