

## THE CHRONOLOGY OF JOSEPH

**“Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.” (Gen 45:4-8)**

Joseph was 17 years old when his brothers sold him into slavery, and 39 years old when he spoke the words of our text. Here are some Scripture references for your consideration.

- Joseph was born in Paddan Aram. He was the 11<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob and the first son of Rachel (Gen. 30:22 - 24).
- He was probably less than 5 when his family returned to the Promised Land.
- Joseph was 17 when his brothers sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:2).
- Joseph was 30 when he was entered into the service of the Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46). This was 13 years after he was sold into slavery. He spent many of those 13 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. His suffering was compounded by the fact that he spent 2 extra years in prison because the chief cupbearer forgot to tell the Pharaoh about his case (Gen. 41:1).
- This means that Joseph was 37 when the 7 years of famine began (Gen. 41:54).
- When the brethren of Joseph came to Egypt the second time to buy food, there had been 2 years of famine (Gen. 45:6). As we have said, Joseph was 39 years old at this time.
- We deduce therefore, that his brothers first trip to Egypt for food came the first year of the famine. At this time Joseph took his brother Simeon as a hostage and demanded that they bring Benjamin to ensure his release (Gen. 42:20, 24).
- His brothers second trip to Egypt came the next year, and this time Joseph arranged to take Benjamin as a “slave” (Gen. 44:17).

As our text indicates, Joseph was not angry with his brothers, but arranged their discomfort for a reason. Perhaps it was to test their hearts and see if they were truly sorry for the way they had treated him. They passed the test! Rachel was Jacob’s favorite wife, and her two sons, Joseph and Benjamin were his favorite sons. The jealousy of his brothers led them to get rid of Joseph, and now Joseph presented them with a perfect opportunity to get rid of Benjamin too. Just as his brothers made a slave out of Joseph, Joseph gave them a chance to also make a slave of Benjamin.

The Scriptures warn about a “root of bitterness” (Heb. 12:14 - 17). Since Esau is mentioned in this passage as an example to avoid, we must be careful to not be like him. If we allow a root of bitterness to grow in our hearts it can cause us to miss the grace of God. Remember! There was a period of 22 years between the time Joseph was sold as a slave, and the time he explained to his brothers that God orchestrated the whole scenario. Joseph was not bitter! He recognized that God had sent him to Egypt as a slave for a purpose. God used Joseph to preserve a remnant on earth and save the lives of his people by a great deliverance.

Joseph was 110 when he died (Gen. 50:26). By “faith” he gave instructions to carry his bones out of Egypt (Heb. 11:22). In this regard he is an excellent example to us all, for faith involves the future. Please consider the possibility that just as God orchestrated the life of Joseph, He is also orchestrating your life as well. Just as the devil motivates people to do evil, God has the power to make all of these evil things work together for good if we only love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).