

“It’s God’s will.”



Recep Tayyip Erdogan has admitted shortcomings in the response, but he appeared to blame fate on a visit to one disaster zone: "Such things have always happened. It's part of destiny's plan."

<sup>18</sup> His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

<sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Genesis 50:18-20

# Decision making and the will of God

Lessons from the life of Joseph – a 2 part series

A Family Life Ministry Sermon

# Points of interest in the Joseph narrative

- God never speaks directly to Joseph as He did to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- Many accounts are in duplets (Joseph has 2 dreams, Pharoah has 2 dreams, there are 2 people recorded in jail with Joseph, there are double repetitions in Potiphar's house and the prison, there are 2 trips to Egypt, etc)
- Joseph is recorded weeping 7 times.

<sup>3</sup> Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. <sup>4</sup> When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

<sup>8</sup> His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Genesis 37:3-8

<sup>9</sup> Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

<sup>10</sup> When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” <sup>11</sup> His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Genesis 37:9-11

# Overall summary of the narrative of Joseph

- Joseph's brothers sell him to slave traders and take him to Egypt (Gen 37)
- He works for Potiphar as a slave and flees from temptation from his wife (Gen 39)
- Falsely accused of rape by the wife, he is imprisoned. In prison he interprets the dreams of the baker and cupbearer (Gen 40).
- He interprets the dreams of Pharaoh and rises in power and status in Egypt (Gen 41)
- He encounters his brothers who do not recognize him when they come seeking food (Gen 42)
- Joseph tests the character of his brothers to see if they have changed (Gen 42-44)
- Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers (Gen 45)
- He calls for his family to come settle in Goshen so that they will survive the famine (Gen 47)
- Jacob is reunited with Joseph and dies in Egypt and is brought back to Canaan for burial (Gen 50)



## In Potiphar's house

<sup>2</sup> The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. <sup>3</sup> When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, <sup>4</sup> Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. <sup>5</sup> From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. <sup>6</sup> So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, *he did not concern himself with anything*

## In Prison

But while Joseph was there in the prison, <sup>21</sup> the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. <sup>22</sup> So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. <sup>23</sup> *The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care,* because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Genesis 39:20-23

<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

Genesis 37:5-6

<sup>6</sup> Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. <sup>7</sup> As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

<sup>8</sup> Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. <sup>9</sup> Then he remembered his

dreams about them and said to them,

"You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

Genesis 42:6-9

<sup>24</sup> He turned away from them and began **to weep**, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. Gen 42:24

<sup>29</sup> As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." <sup>30</sup> Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place **to weep**. He went into his private room and wept there. Gen 43:29-30.

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And **he wept so loudly** that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Gen 45:1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin **and wept**, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and **wept over them**. Afterward his brothers talked with him. Gen 45:14-15.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and **wept for a long time**. Gen 46:29.

Joseph threw himself on his father and **wept over him** and kissed him. Gen 50:1.

When their message came to him, **Joseph wept**. Gen 50:17.

<sup>4</sup> 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! <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. <sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

<sup>8</sup> “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. <sup>10</sup> You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. <sup>11</sup> I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

Genesis 45:4-11

<sup>5</sup> Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: <sup>7</sup> We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

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<sup>18</sup> His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Genesis 50:18-20

# **1. God's will does not rob us of the freedom to choose.**

- God could have chosen to stop Joseph's brothers from selling him into slavery but He did not.
- God gave us free will to choose. If God intervened at every moment of danger, free will would not exist.





**Shinjuku Mitsui Building**



**US Bank Tower**



**Building in Turkey**









<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/15/asia/malaysia-landslide-deaths-intl-hnk/index.html>



- Collective human choices have resulted in a world of haves and have nots.
- The impact of natural disasters and diseases will very much depend on where you are born in the world.
- Our free will makes a huge difference to a world broken by sin.
- *Yet mankind always lays the blame with God.*



<https://www.spirit1053.com/blog/we-all-have-cain-abel-inside-of-us-who-will-you-be>

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<sup>7</sup> But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. Genesis 45:7

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## **2. God's will can use evil and suffering to save lives.**



**IF Joseph wasn't sold into slavery.....**

## 2. God's will can use evil and suffering to save lives.

- God used the evil deeds of the brothers to save the lives of the Israelites.
- God used the evil deeds of the Pharisees and the Roman Empire to bring salvation to mankind.
- Without suffering we will not realize this is a broken world in need of salvation.

### **3. God's will involves human responsibility**

Decisions Joseph made:-

- 1) Chose to flee from temptation from Potiphar's wife.
- 2) Chose to excel in work in Potiphar's household and prison.
- 3) Chose to have compassion for the baker and cupbearer in prison.

<sup>24</sup> He turned away from them and began **to weep**, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. Gen 42:24

<sup>29</sup> As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." <sup>30</sup> Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place **to weep**. He went into his private room and wept there. Gen 43:29-30.

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And **he wept so loudly** that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Gen 45:1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin **and wept**, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and **wept over them**. Afterward his brothers talked with him. Gen 45:14-15.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and **wept for a long time**. Gen 46:29.

Joseph threw himself on his father and **wept over him** and kissed him. Gen 50:1.

When their message came to him, **Joseph wept**. Gen 50:17.

<sup>24</sup> He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. Gen 42:24 – *Joseph is weeping in a place apart from his brothers*

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Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup> And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. Gen 45:1-2 – *Joseph weeps in front of his family*

<sup>14</sup> Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. <sup>15</sup> And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him. Gen 45:14-15 – *Joseph weeps TWICE, and his weeping reconciles him with his brothers*

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Joseph threw himself on his father and wept over him and kissed him. Gen 50:1 – *Joseph's weeping is prompted by Jacob*

When their message came to him, Joseph wept. Gen 50:17 – *Joseph is weeping in a place apart from his brothers*



**A** Gen 42:24 – *Joseph is weeping in a place apart from his brothers*

**B** Gen 43:29-30 – *Joseph's weeping is prompted by Benjamin.*

**C** Gen 45:1-2 – *Joseph weeps in front of his family*

**D** Gen 45:14-15 – *Joseph weeps TWICE, and his weeping reconciles him with his brothers*

**C** Gen 46:29 – *Joseph weeps in front of his family*

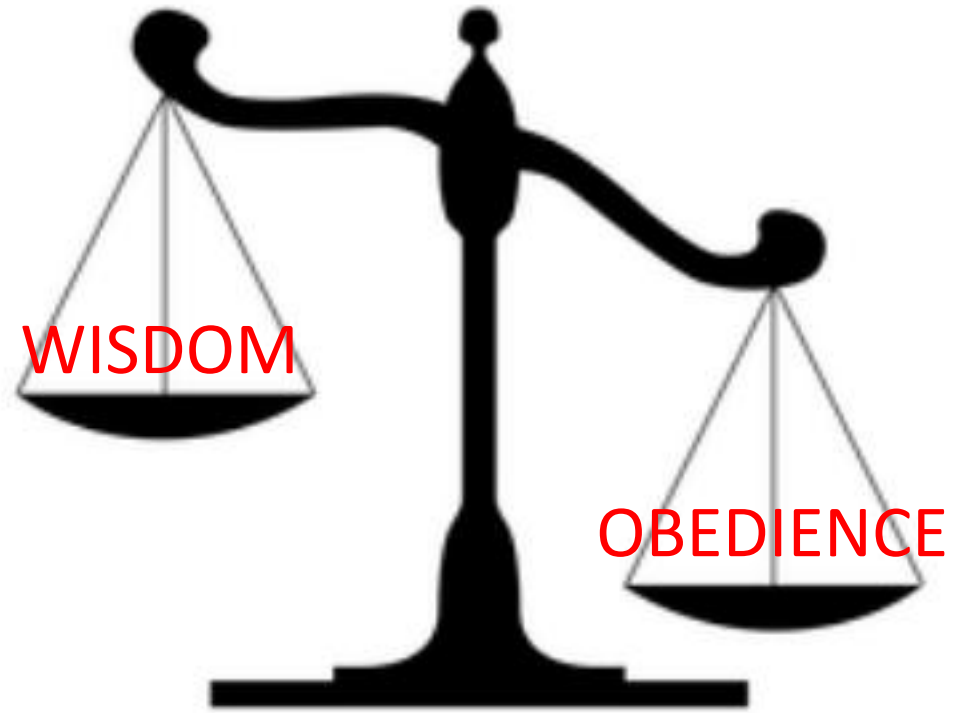
**B** Gen 50:1 – *Joseph's weeping is prompted by Jacob*

**A** Gen 50:17 – *Joseph is weeping in a place apart from his brothers*

### 3. God's will involves human responsibility

Decisions Joseph made:-

- 1) Chose to flee from temptation from Potiphar's wife.
- 2) Chose to excel in work in Potiphar's household and prison.
- 3) Chose to have compassion for the baker and cupbearer in prison.
- 4) *Chose to forgive and reconcile with his brothers **AFTER** testing them.*



- 1. God's will does not rob us of the freedom to choose.**
- 2. God's will can use evil and suffering to save lives.**
- 3. God's will involves human responsibility.**
- 4. *God has a specific life plan for each one of us.***

## 4. God has a specific life plan for each one of us

Question: Does God have a specific life plan for each one of us?

*Answer: Yes. He knows every hair on our head and every sparrow that falls from the sky.*

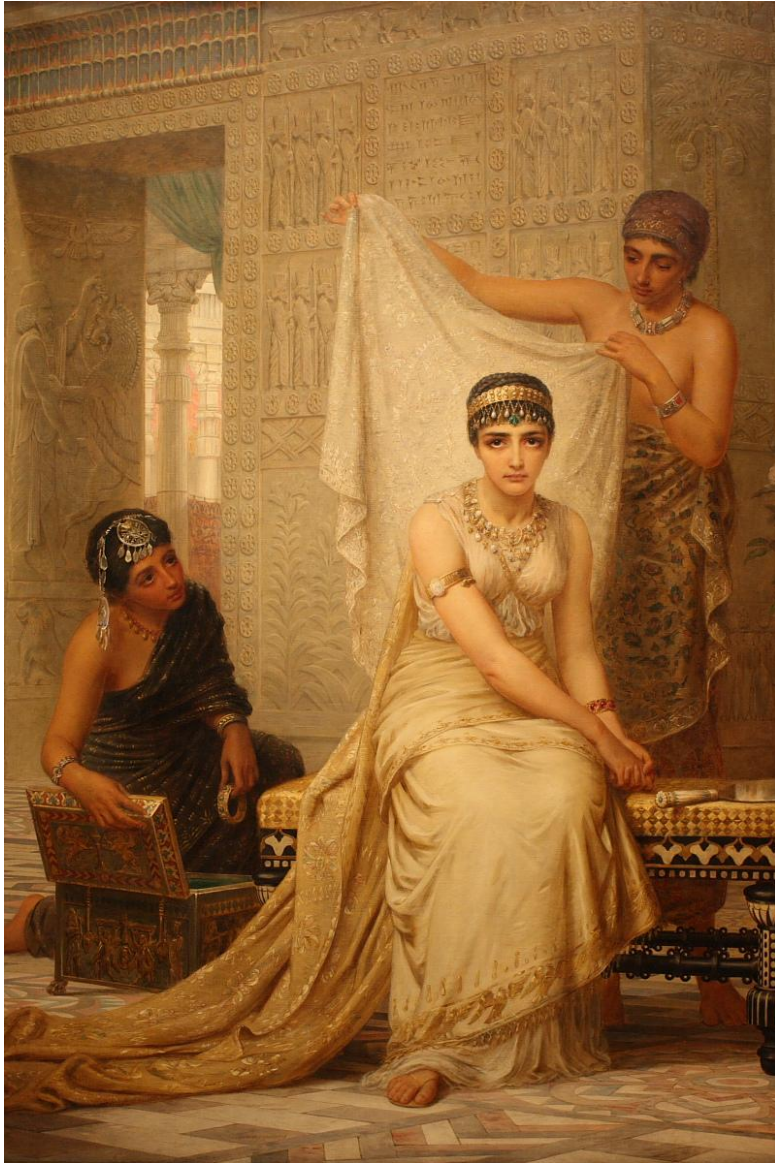
Question: Can God reveal this specific life plan to believers?

*Answer: YES.*

***In MOST occasions it is only revealed retrospectively.***

Question: Should believers seek to FIND this specific life plan that God has for each one of us?

***Answer: NO***



*14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"*  
*Esther 4:14*

***WHAT WAS QUEEN'S ESTHER'S  
RESPONSE?***

# The most specific life plan in history of mankind to a particular individual required the hardest decision ever made



*42 "Father, if you  
are willing, take  
this cup from me;  
yet not my will,  
but yours be done."  
Luke 22:42*



# Why the idea of finding God's will is not biblical

- Not explicitly found in the bible
- Biblical narratives used to support this idea (eg: Gideon putting out the fleece) are not normative
- Can be a subtle form of divination
- Inconsistently applied only to certain big decisions in life
- Discounts confirmation bias
- *Pattern usually involves self actualization decisions*

# Challenge

- 1) Are you willing to make some hard decisions today (*like Joseph reconciling with his brothers*).
- 2) If you struggle with Point 1, at least start off with one small but still hard decision (*like Joseph choosing to work hard in prison*).
- 3) If you struggle with Point 1 and 2, at least talk to someone in church (*be wise as the serpent and innocent as the dove*).