

genesis

God's Book of Beginnings

God used the famine to bring Jacob/Israel and his sons into Egypt ^{Psalm 33:18-19} under Joseph's rule. They went to Egypt as the family of Israel and left 400 years later ^{Genesis 15:13} as the nation of Israel.

Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt (Genesis 42)

42:1-5 During the famine, Jacob and family were running out of grain. Having heard there was plenty in Egypt ^{Acts 7:12}, Jacob sent ten of his sons (all but Benjamin) to buy Egyptian grain.

With Joseph assumed dead, Benjamin was Jacob's only connection with his deceased and most beloved wife, Rachel ^{Genesis 29:17,20,30}. Therefore, Jacob would not risk sending him to Egypt for grain.

42:6-16 As governor of Egypt ^{Nehemiah 5:14}, Joseph was in charge of the sale of the saved grain.

When Jacob's sons arrived, Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

Appropriately, the brothers humbly bowed before the "governor of the land", reminding Joseph of his prophetic dreams which were ridiculed by his father and brothers ^{Genesis 37:5-11}.

Joseph immediately began testing his brothers by asking where they were from and accusing them of being spies. The brothers repeatedly declared their innocence, but Joseph demanded proof in the form of one of them bringing the youngest brother (Benjamin) to him ^{Genesis 43:29}.

The words and actions of the brothers (bowing "down to" Joseph ^{v.6} and calling him their "lord" ^{v.10}) proved Joseph's "reign over" them, thus 'partially' fulfilling Joseph's prophetic dream ^{Genesis 37:5-8}.

This was one of four times they bowed ^{Genesis 43:26,28, 44:14}, admitting Joseph ruled them ^{Genesis 37:8}.

The complete fulfillment of his dream would only be accomplished when all 11 brothers were there.

The brothers proclaimed they were "honest men" ^{v.11}, but they knew differently in their hearts ^{v.21-22}.

When Jacob's sons spoke with Joseph they had no idea who he was, because (1) it had been at least 20 years since they had seen him ^{Genesis 37:2, 41:46,53-54}, (2) Joseph's appearance was Egyptian, (3) Joseph did not treat them with any familiarity and (4) they assumed Joseph was dead ^{v.13}.

When Joseph swore by saying "As surely as Pharaoh lives" ^{v.15}, he masked his identity once more. However, his later statement: "I fear God" ^{v.18} should have been a subtle hint of his actual identity.

Perhaps Joseph's demand to see his younger brother was a way to find out if they 'killed' him, too.

Genesis 42-44

42:17-24 After placing the brothers in custody for “three days”, Joseph released them, saying that just one of them must stay in custody while the rest go back to take the grain and bring the youngest brother back. The brothers began to recognize this situation as a judgement of God for their treatment of Joseph. Reuben reminded his brothers of his plea to not do harm to their brother ^{Genesis 37:21-22}. Realizing their hearts were beginning to soften and understand the wrong they had done to him, Joseph stepped away from view and wept. He then chose Simeon to stay with him ^{Genesis 43:23} while the other nine brothers went back to get Benjamin.

In a sign of his softening toward his brothers, Joseph’s earlier pronouncement that he would allow one brother to get Benjamin while the “rest of [the brothers] will be kept in prison” ^{v.16}, was reversed when he decreed one brother would “stay ... in prison” while the remaining brothers could “go” ^{v.19}. Knowing Reuben was the oldest brother, why did Joseph choose Simeon to remain in prison ^{v.24b} ?

The painful memories of Joseph begging for his life ^{v.21} surfaced as the brothers agonized over what they had done and the prospect they may have to bring their father’s other favorite son, Benjamin.

Joseph tested his brothers to see if they changed since they sold him as a slave ^{Genesis 37:28}. However, instead of being spiteful and angry, Joseph had a tender heart toward them ^{v.24}.

42:25-28 Joseph sent his nine brothers on their way, with provisions for the trip, grain for their family and the silver they had earlier paid for the grain. The first night on the road, one of the brothers found his silver, which they all interpreted as another sign of God’s punishment.

The brothers assumed the only way the silver one of the brothers paid for the grain could be in his bag was that God put it there to punish them, and Joseph would conclude they were thieves/spies. Why do you think the other brothers did not look in their grain sacks until they arrived home ^{v.35} ?

42:29-38 On arriving home, the brothers told Jacob the details of all that happened in Egypt. When each man’s silver was discovered, they were afraid. Reuben offered for Jacob to kill his two sons if he was not able to bring Benjamin back when they returned to Egypt, but Jacob refused to let them return ^{Genesis 43:13}, because Joseph and Simeon were already ‘dead’ ^{v.36} to him. Jacob indirectly exclaimed ^{v.36b} that his grief (and self-pity ^{Job 3:25}) would be the same as he experienced with the loss of Joseph ^{Genesis 37:34-35}, if the same fate fell upon Benjamin.

Some of Jacob’s words and actions ^{v.36} revealed he lost his Godly perspective for a period of time.

As a result of their sins against Joseph, the testing of the brothers was necessary before they could understand and value God’s blessings ^{Hebrews 12:7-11}. The testing was incomplete and continued.

Please forward questions/concerns about these notes to ron price, 505-294-4743, pricegang@integrity.com.

The Brothers Make a Second Journey to Egypt (Genesis 43)

43:1-7 The famine continued, and as time passed they consumed all of their grain, so Jacob decided the brothers must go back to purchase more grain in Egypt. Judah reminded Jacob they could not return without taking Benjamin ^{Genesis 42:20} and offered to be responsible for him.

Jacob delayed his inevitable decision by getting angry at his sons for even mentioning Benjamin.

There were still 5+ years of famine to go ^{Genesis 45:6}, so they were forced to go back a second time.

43:8-14 Judah offered himself to Jacob as the guarantee of Benjamin's safety and return.

And, understanding they had no choice, Jacob told them to return to Egypt with a gift of their "best products", the silver that had been returned to them, silver for the next load of grain and Benjamin. Jacob prayed for God to grant mercy ^{Psalms 25:6} for the safe return of Benjamin.

Earlier, Judah suggested they sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt instead of killing him ^{Genesis 37:26-27}, and now he was negotiating with his father to let him take Benjamin to Egypt. Judah rejected Reuben's previous offer to protect Benjamin ^{Genesis 42:37-38}; however, Judah's was accepted ^{v.11-13}.

Jacob was resigned ^{v.11a} to possibly losing a third son (Joseph, Simeon, Benjamin ^{Genesis 42:36}), but he took time to pray to God Almighty ('Ēl Šadday) for "the man" (Joseph) to grant them mercy ^{v.14}.

The gift of nonessential items for Joseph consisted of balm, honey, spices, myrrh and nuts ^{v.11}.

43:15-25 The ten brothers returned quickly to Egypt. As soon as Joseph saw Benjamin, he told his steward: "Take [them] to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner", indicating a celebration ^{Luke 15:23}. However, Joseph's brothers interpreted the actions as a trap to enslave them, so they quickly appealed to Joseph's steward. The steward responded with reassurance that "your God, the God of your father" was protecting them, the release of Simeon, provisions for their donkeys and water to wash their feet before the meal ^{Genesis 18:4-5}

The brothers were so concerned for their lives that they missed the significance of the steward's understanding and appreciation of "Your God, the God of your father" ^{v.23}. How did he know this?

43:26-34 As Joseph arrived, the brothers bowed ^{Genesis 42:6} and presented him gifts ^{Matthew 2:11*}.

Joseph inquired about 'their' father, greeted his brother and withdrew to his room to weep.

After composing himself, Joseph started the feast, serving the three groups (divided because of social stigma among Egyptians ^{Genesis 46:33-34}) "by themselves": himself (due to his rank), the brothers and the attending Egyptians. The brothers were served from "Joseph's table", with Benjamin receiving by far the largest portion of food ^{Genesis 45:21-22} (another test).

Not having seen his full brother, Benjamin, for more than 20 years, Joseph wept again ^{Genesis 42:24}.

Genesis 42-44

At the very moment all of Joseph's eleven brothers "presented to [Joseph] the gifts ...and bowed down before him to the ground" v.26, Joseph's prophetic dream Genesis 37:5-8 was completely fulfilled.

The brothers were 'astonished' at their being seated before Joseph from the oldest to youngest v.33.

Joseph, Benjamin and the Silver Cup (Genesis 44)

44:1-13 After the feast, Joseph instructed his steward to fill his his brothers sacks with as much grain "as they can carry" in preparation for their return home. In addition, Joseph had his servants put all of the silver they had brought in each man's sack and also place his personal silver cup in Benjamin's sack. The brothers left early the next morning, but Joseph sent his steward out to catch them with the silver and the cup. The steward did what he was told, and when he caught them, he accused the brothers of having "repaid good with evil" Psalm 109:5.

After claiming innocence, the brothers allowed a search of their belongings, and of course, the silver and Joseph's silver cup were all found, so everyone returned to "the city" to Joseph.

These were a continuation of Joseph's tests for his brothers. Joseph wanted to see if they had learned their lesson, had repentance and had compassion for Benjamin (the other son of Rachel).

When he caught up with the brothers, the steward deliberately created tension among them by opening the sacks in descending age, while being fully aware that the cup was in Benjamin's sack. The cup's discovery provided another opportunity for betrayal, since the brothers could have let the steward take only Benjamin, but instead they grieved and also offered themselves 1 Kings 3:16-28.

44:14-17 Joseph questioned Judah and his brothers, who again assumed God had done this because of their actions against Joseph. They all submitted themselves to Joseph as slaves; however, Joseph repeated the earlier demand that the one with the cup must be his slave v.10.

Since Jacob gave Judah the responsibility for Benjamin Genesis 43:8-14, Judah became the family leader/spokesman v.14,16,18 in the interactions with Joseph about the lives of Benjamin and brothers.

Joseph spoke of divination (hydromancy) v.5,15, Deuteronomy 18:9-14 only as part of his Egyptian cover.

44:18-34 Judah pleaded with Joseph to show Benjamin mercy, by recounting the events of their visits and the conversations between the brothers/Joseph and the brothers/Jacob. Judah's final plea was for Joseph to punish him, instead of Benjamin Isaiah 53:5*, by making him a slave and by allowing Benjamin to be free to return with his other brothers to their father.

Many scholars consider Judah's selfless plea to trade his life for Benjamin's life v.18-34 one of the most wonderful literary expressions of love – love for Benjamin and for his father, Jacob/Israel.

Christians face James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7 (Joseph's brothers faced note on Genesis 42:29-38) testing of their faith before they can fully appreciate and enjoy the incredible blessings of God Matthew 5:10-12, Hebrews 12:7-11.

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