

Genesis 44:18 – 47:27 Israel Journeys to Egypt

Introduction:

As we completed the last parsha of study, Joseph tested his brothers to see if their hearts were pure or evil. The last time Joseph saw his brothers they sold him as a slave to Ishmaelite traders from Midian, headed to Egypt. They sold him only after discussing killing him. It was his older brother Judah who suggested selling him as a slave instead of killing him.

In Chapter 38 we saw a great shift in the heart of Judah following his sin with Tamar. After living the life of a Canaanite, Judah was brought to repentance through his misdeeds with Tamar, producing two beautiful sons. The younger of the twin sons, Perez, is destined to be the forebear of Messiah.

The true heart of Judah will be displayed in the beginning of this study. Joseph has tricked his brothers by placing his “divining” goblet in the grain sack of his younger brother Benjamin. This ruse allowed Joseph to declare that Benjamin must remain in Egypt as his, Joseph’s, personal slave. Judah has promised Jacob that he, Judah, will be personally responsible for returning Benjamin to his father following their trip to buy grain in Egypt. Judah knew too well the sin of not honoring a promise. He promised Tamar that when Shelah was old enough, she could marry him. Judah reneged on that promise and brought great disgrace on himself. He promised his father the safety of the last brother and he intended to fulfill that promise, even if it cost him his own life.

Genesis 44: 18-34

Joseph has been in Egypt for about 22 years: 1 year as a slave in Potiphar’s house; 12 years in prison; and 9 years as Viceroy of Egypt. It is in the second year of famine, following the 7 years of plentiful harvest. Joseph represents the physical salvation of Israel, his earthly family from famine. Spiritually, Joseph represents Messiah coming to earth (Egypt) to save His bride. Saving the bride begins with Israel, and then the rest of the world.

The prayer of Judah was an intercessory prayer on behalf of the youngest brother of the clan, Benjamin, the love of his very old father. Judah did not pray on his own behalf. His prayer was totally unselfish. He was thinking first of his father, Jacob, and his younger brother Benjamin. Perhaps Judah, too, is a messiah picture praying for his brothers, Israel, or even one of the great prophets interceding for wayward Israel. He knew that if Benjamin did not return to Canaan, to his father, Jacob would surely die a very grief stricken and broken old man. Not knowing this Viceroy is his own brother Joseph, Judah could not bear to think of leaving his youngest brother in

the hands of a pagan king in a foreign land. This act may be tantamount to selling Benjamin's brother, Joseph to Ishmaelite traders 22 years earlier - a sin he has had to live with since that fateful day.

Joseph has announced he will keep Benjamin as a servant or slave, and the rest of the brothers are free to return to Canaan. Judah interceded for his brother:

Vs 18-29 Judah began by giving honor to Joseph as a superior, a mighty king, in the very image of Pharaoh himself. Judah began to talk about his father, Jacob, an elderly man still gripped by grief in the loss of his beloved son 22 years earlier. In fact, Jacob was still so gripped in grief for the loss of Joseph that he could not bear to allow Benjamin to travel to Egypt. Jacob's grief came from the fact that he sent Joseph on the road and he never returned, presumably dead. Rachel, his beloved wife died on the road in giving birth to Benjamin. Now, if he sends Benjamin on the road, he, too, is likely to die violently. Judah shared the quandary of the family given by Joseph, "if you do not bring Benjamin to Egypt, you can buy no more food".

My father, your servant, responded by saying; "If I send Benjamin to Egypt and he does not return, I will go to my grave with a broken heart".

Vs 30-34 Judah here took a very personal responsibility for the well being of both Benjamin and Jacob, his father. If Benjamin does not return to Jacob from Egypt, Judah was taking the loss as his own personal responsibility, and he would have done anything to insure Benjamin returns safely to their father. Judah begged Joseph to release Benjamin to return to Canaan, and keep Judah as a servant instead - for the sake of Jacob's wellbeing. Here we see Judah's true heart. He was not thinking of self. He was not thinking of any personal gain. His heart was for his father first, and his brother second. Spiritually we find Judah petitioning on behalf of Jacob, or Israel, a messianic position to be sure.

Chapter 45 Joseph revealed himself to his brothers.

Vs. 1-3 Joseph could no longer restrain himself. He had been testing his brothers ever since their arrival in Egypt, and he found them much different than from the day they sold him into slavery. They had repented of their sins against Joseph and Jacob. As a loving father he responded to the penitent Judah, and all the brothers. He cleared the room of any Egyptians and stood alone with his brothers to tell them it is Joseph they are addressing, the little brother they hated so much in younger years.

Just as Jesus, our mediator before God, hears our prayers and responds to our penitent hearts with gladness and acceptance, Joseph responded to his brothers.

However, his big “reveal” struck fear and terror in the hearts of his brothers, and they could not respond to his announcement. In Acts 2 Peter and the disciples are preaching to their Jewish brothers from the south steps of the Temple, explaining God’s plan of redemption, and his audience gets it - they killed the Messiah! Scripture says they were “cut to their hearts”, and asked fearfully, “men and brethren, what must we do?”

Vs. 4 -15 Joseph demonstrated God’s response to us when He grants mercy and forgiveness.

- Do not be distressed
- Do not reproach yourselves
- God sent me here to provide for you
- God sent me to insure your survival from certain doom (eternal damnation)
- God sent me here to sustain you (Acts 2 - gift of the Holy Spirit, the comforter)
- God sent me here to deliver you
- It was not you who sent me here - but God
- God has made me “father” and “master” of Pharaoh
- Go report to my father and tell him I am alive and very well
- Bring my father to me

And he fell first on Benjamin’s neck and wept, and then he kissed all his brothers, and they all wept, and conversed with one another.

Vs. 16 -20 The news of Joseph’s brothers arrival reached Pharaoh, and Pharaoh was pleased. Pharaoh instructed Joseph to send his brothers home with their animals loaded with grain, and instruct them to load up all their households, especially Jacob, and move to Egypt. He commanded that they are to take wagons from Egypt to Canaan to expedite the move of all the clan. And they can have the best land in Egypt!

Vs 21-24 So with a flourishing caravan of animals and wagons the brothers returned to Canaan.

- Joseph gave the brothers provisions for the journey (Holy Spirit, Comforter, Counselor John 14:25,26).

- Joseph gave each of them a set of new clothes, but to Benjamin Joseph gave 300 pieces of silver and 5 changes of clothes.
- The number 5 always represents grace, in this case, the grace that is shown through love from one brother to another.
- The changes of clothes represent atonement as well, very much like the new clothes we are given at baptism. Galatians 3:27 records we have been “clothed” in Christ at baptism. (See also Jude 23; Revelation 3:4,5) When God removed Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, He clothed them in animal skins, signifying a sacrifice had been made to cover the sin of disobeying God.
- 300 pieces of silver is 10 times the amount the brothers sold Joseph for. Perhaps it can be looked at as 3x10x10, or the number for “completeness times itself times the number representing God. Silver represents atonement.

Vs. 25 - The brothers of Joseph returned home with a mixed bag of emotions. Their brother, Joseph, whom they sold into slavery was alive and is a king in Egypt. They have been forgiven from their treacheries of 22 years earlier. There is salvation from the famine awaiting them in Egypt. All is good!

EXCEPT - how were they going to tell Jacob about Joseph? How much confession would they have to do and own up to their misdeeds that has caused so much grief to their father? Scripture only gives us a peek into the telling of the story by the brothers. In verse 26 it says Jacob rejected their story that his beloved son, Joseph might actually be alive and well. However, in verse 27 it says the brothers related to Jacob “all the words Joseph has spoken to them, and Jacob saw the wagons that Joseph had sent for him, and the spirit of their father Jacob was revived”.

Chapter 46 Jacob (Israel) enters Egypt

Vs. 1-4 Israel, the spiritual name of Jacob set out toward Egypt. His first stop however was Beer-sheba, a most significant place in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This was a holy place for them, a place where God provided water and land over the years. Here Israel sacrificed to God, sacrifices of praise and blessing. He was leaving the Promised Land to go into the “world”, a place away from God. This should remind us of the dream Jacob had on Mount Moriah when he was fleeing his home and going to Padan-Aram. He had an amazing dream allowing him to look into heaven and seeing God above a ladder extending from heaven to earth. God spoke blessings on Jacob and made covenantal promises that he would one day return to this Promised Land.

God spoke to Israel in night visions:

“Jacob, Jacob. I am God - the God of your father. Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall surely bring you up; and Joseph shall place his hand on your eyes”.

Vs. 5-7 Jacob arose from Beer-sheba and headed to Egypt with all his family, livestock, wealth which had been amassed in the Land of Canaan. He had sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters, and the number of his clan was 70 persons in all.

Not only did Jacob represent the beginnings of the Jewish people, but the number 70 signifies that he represented the entire world (70 nations) at this time.

Vs. 8-27 a listing of all the people who are a part of the clan of Jacob who would be living in Egypt, the foundation of the nation God will bring out of Egypt in the years to come.

Vs. 28 - Jacob sent Judah ahead of the clan to prepare the way and the place for them in Goshen. The significance of Judah over his three older brothers was shown here in this significant leadership assignment.

Vs. 29-34 Joseph harnessed his chariot (kings ride in chariots) and went to greet his father, Israel, in Goshen. They have a blessed and highly emotional reunion, Jacob and this son who was lost. It was so fulfilling to Jacob that he felt that at long last he could die in peace.

Joseph prepared his brothers for the day they will meet Pharaoh and he instructed them how to answer Pharaoh's questions. The Egyptians did not like shepherds or sheep, so the brothers were instructed to tell Pharaoh they are cattlemen and herdsmen; all their lives they have been cattlemen and herdsmen. This would insure they are given land in Goshen, prime real estate, a place in the Nile delta where grass was more abundant, and where Pharaoh's herd of cattle were kept as well.

Chapter 47

Vs. 1- 6 Joseph presented his family, in part to Pharaoh. He selected the 5 least brothers, fearing perhaps if Pharaoh saw the stronger ones, he would draft them into his army. No doubt word of Levi and Simeon, the destroyers of Shechem, had reached Egypt years earlier.

Pharaoh granted the family permission to dwell in the land of Goshen, some of the best grazing land in Egypt. He also extended the welcome for Joseph to hire his brothers to be herdsmen of Pharaoh's own herds.

Vs. 7-12 Then Joseph presented his father, Jacob, to Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

Pharaoh asked Jacob, "How many are the days of years of your life?"

Jacob responds:

- The days of the years of my sojourns have been a hundred and thirty (130) years.
- Few and bad have been the days of the years of my life.
- I am older sooner than my forefathers in their life journeys.

Jacob has lived a fascinating life, full of adventure, hardship, danger and grief. Yet, he was the father of a clan of 70 people, far greater in number than his father or grandfather. He felt his days are few but he had gained a special sense of peace having been reunited with his beloved son, Joseph.

Joseph settled his family in the land of Goshen, with Pharaoh's blessing and he sustained the family with work and food in the midst of the great famine.

Vs. 13 -25 As the famine raged on for another 5 years, Joseph shrewdly preserved the people **while obtaining all material wealth in the land for Pharaoh.**

- Vs 14 Joseph gathered all the money in the land in exchange for grain
- Vs 16 Joseph gathered all the livestock for Pharaoh in exchange for grain
- Vs. 20 Joseph acquired all the land in Egypt in exchange for grain (Joseph resettled the cities of the land, moved people around as he saw benefit for the greatness of Pharaoh, and demonstrated the authority of Pharaoh over all land and people in Egypt)
- He did not acquire the property held by the priests who served Pharaoh and were granted a special stipend by Pharaoh
- Vs 23 Joseph acquired all the people as serfs to Pharaoh in exchange for grain.

Joseph required the people to sow crops as share croppers. Pharaoh would receive one-fifth of the produce and the people would retain four-fifths for their needs of seed for future crop and for food for their families.

Vs. 26 The people were thankful they had been spared and sustained through the famine. Even though they gave up money, livestock, land and self, they willingly agreed to serve Pharaoh as his serfs.

Vs. 27 In contrast to the general population of Egypt, Israel settled in the land of Goshen, acquired property, was fruitful and multiplied. (God's plan of redemption required developing a righteous nation from which the Messiah would come. These are the very seeds of that righteous nation moving the Plan of Redemption farther down the path to fulfillment.)