

Lesson: Joseph’s Favor and the Promise Pt. 3 (Genesis 42:1-45:23)

The story picks up with the famine Joseph predicted, ravaging not only Egypt but the land of Canaan, where the family of Israel resided. Like Abraham and Isaac, going to Egypt was often a solution to the famines experienced in Canaan (Gen 12:10; 26:2). Thus, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy bread. Instead, they found themselves encountering Joseph who would set them up, arresting Simeon, threatening to arrest Benjamin, but all to get his family to Egypt so he could care for them. God gave Joseph favor in the midst of tribulation to save the very people who wanted him dead.

1. *Joseph’s dreams come true (Gen 42:1-44:17)*

- a. We have to remember that this story begins with Joseph’s dreams of standing above his brothers. This, compiled with their envy of how he was treated, led them to want to destroy him (Gen 37:7ff). Yet, on three separate occasions the narrative indicates that they bowed themselves before him (Gen 42:6; 43:26, 28). Joseph’s dreams may have appeared to have come from arrogance but despite how unacceptable they were, they were from God. And anything that God reveals WILL happen.
- b. We are not sure why Joseph goes about this elaborate scheme of sending his brothers back and forth, arresting Simeon. But we can see that it is effective in getting them resources and convincing them to bring Benjamin back. It could be he wanted to slightly punish them. He did want to make sure he saw his full brother, Benjamin. He made sure Benjamin received 5 times more than everyone else, which was unheard of for the youngest child, when he made the brothers eat with him on their second journey (43:34).

2. *Judah pleads for Benjamin (Gen 44:18-34):* Judah’s recap of the narrative is helpful for understanding the dynamics of the situation. The brothers were concerned about killing their father with grief. Judah was willing to stand in for Benjamin if necessary to make sure their father would not collapse from the weight of losing Rachel’s other son. To be sure, he was upset about losing Simeon as well (Gen 42:36). Jacob understands his posterity is key to fulfilling God’s call and promise. He did not want to lose any of his children.

3. *Joseph reveals God’s plan (45:1-28)*

- a. At this point, Joseph became overwrought with seeing his brothers. He could no longer play the Egyptian role, and he revealed that he was alive to them. The brothers were upset, filled with guilt because they knew what they had done to Joseph (vv. 1-3).
- b. But Joseph, despite some of his scheming, showed forgiveness. The reason was because he knew why all of this had happened. He asked them not to be angry with themselves because God’s providence was involved. He was sent before them all to preserve their lives, to save his family. If Joseph had not been in Egypt, his family would have died in the famine (vv. 5-15).
- c. God’s providence displayed through Pharaoh’s acceptance of the family. He welcomed the family of Israel and promised them prosperity, Egyptians were typically cautious (v. 18-20; cf. 42:9, 11, 14, 16). When Joseph was gone, the Egyptians went back to their suspicions and placed Israel in bondage (Exod 1:8-14).
- d. With the promise of Pharaoh, they went back with more than they came done with and retrieved their father. Now, the family of Israel would find their way to Egypt to survive.