

Gen 42 – Brothers bow down to Joseph

JOSEPH SEES HIS TEN BROTHERS

The true interpretation of Joseph's treatment of his brethren is to be found in the supposition that he repeated toward them, as nearly as possible, the behavior that they had shown to himself at the pit's mouth, and this with no thought of retaliation, but that their consciences might be awakened, and that he might discover if they would deal differently with Benjamin than they had dealt with him. He needed to be sure of their repentance before he could trust himself to them again. His purpose therefore was in part secured when he heard them saying to each other in the dear old home-tongue, which they never expected him to understand, "We are verily guilty because of our brother." So God deals with us. The east wind blows bitterly in our faces, the famine is behind and the harsh governor before. All these things are hard to bear; but behind them is the tenderest love, which struggles with its tears and is only eager to get us right before entrusting itself to us. – F.B. Meyer

Gen 42:1-2 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.

This illustrates faith. A great many people say that faith is so mysterious to them and that they don't know how to believe. I talked to a man who did not want to believe, but his argument was, "Well, how can I believe?" Notice here how Jacob believed. He heard something: "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." He believed it, believed that it would bring life to them. So he acted upon his belief: "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die." My friend, that is what saving faith is. Some folk ask, "How can I believe in Jesus?" Can you imagine Jacob standing there before his ten sons and saying, "I've heard that there is corn down in Egypt, but how am I going to believe it?" Well, the way to believe it is to act upon it. The Bible says, "... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ..." (Act_16:31). You hear something and you believe it. That is what old Jacob did. That is the way he got corn which brought life to his family. And the way you and I get eternal life is through faith in Christ. - McGee

Gen 42:3-5 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Suppose mischief befalls the other ten boys, then what? Well, for one thing they are older. But if you want to know the truth, it wouldn't hurt Jacob as much as to lose Benjamin. Benjamin and Joseph were Rachel's boys, and Rachel was the wife he had deeply loved. And now he sends out all ten and keeps only Benjamin with him.

Now we come to this dramatic moment— McGee

Gen 42:6-8 And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

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Joseph has been watching for them. He knew they would have to come. There had been delegations there from all over the inhabited earth of that day. The famine was worldwide. So he watches, and lo and behold, here come the ten men. They all bow down before him. They got right down on their faces before Joseph. You wonder how he felt. By the way, what do you think of? Here is the literal fulfillment of the dreams of Joseph. Do you remember how he had dreamed as a boy that all the sheaves bowed down to his sheaf? Here it is taking place—all his older brothers are down on their faces before him.

Do you know why he treated them roughly? He is testing them. We will find that he is going to test them all the way through. He is going to ask them some penetrating questions. - McGee

Gen 42:9-13 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

Believe me, Joseph is pouring it on—

He is trying to get as much information as he can about his family without letting them know who he is. He accuses them of being spies.

There are only ten men there before him. They confess that they are really twelve and that one is home with their father. The other “is not” is what they think. In other words, they consider Joseph dead, but there he is standing before them! - McGee

Gen 42:14-18 And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies: Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

Joseph is attempting to make contact with his youngest brother. These men are really half-brothers of his, but Benjamin is his full-brother, and he wants to see him. This is the way he attempts to accomplish this. He locked them up in the town bastille. Things look bad for them now, and they wonder what is going to happen.

If there was anything that should have given the brothers an inkling of an idea who Joseph was, this statement was it. He says, “I fear God.” Apparently in that day there were people other than just Jacob and his family who knew God. They knew that the way to God was by sacrifice. However, this sort of thing probably would not have excited the interest of these brethren. Maybe it even made them a little suspicious of this man. At least he gave a testimony for God. I want you to note that Joseph never misses an opportunity to give a testimony for God. Certainly he is giving one here. He always gives God the glory as the One who is directing his life. At least the statement that he fears God should have encouraged the brothers to believe that they would be treated justly at his hand. - McGee

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Gen 42:19-20 *If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.*

These brothers are men, some of them being over fifty years old, and now they find themselves in a real predicament. They are being dealt with by one who fears God, but they are afraid because they don't know what he is going to do. Joseph makes the pretext of testing them to see whether they are true men, but what he really wants is for his younger brother to come the next time. - McGee

Gen 42:21-22 *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.*

What is taking place here is quite interesting. They are speaking in Hebrew, and Joseph can understand them. Joseph had been speaking to them through an interpreter. He didn't need to, but he did because he is posing as an Egyptian. They are making a real confession of their guilt.

They feel that what is happening to them is the vengeance of God upon them for the way they treated Joseph. - McGee

Gen 42:23-24 *And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.*

They say that this evil thing is coming upon them because of the evil they had done to Joseph. They are really repentant now. Joseph hears every bit of it, and he is moved toward them. He would love to walk up to them, throw his arms around each one of them, and call them "brother." But he dares not do it because he would never get Benjamin there.

He gives them a real test now. They must leave one of the brothers, and it is Simeon who is to stay. Joseph was so moved, so emotionally charged by all this that he had to weep. But he goes aside and washes his face; then comes in again as if nothing has happened.

I don't have any idea why they chose Simeon. I take it that while Joseph was gone out of the room, his brothers made the choice for Simeon to stay, and Joseph accepted that choice. - McGee

Gen 42:25-28 *Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?*

They feel that this is the judgment of God upon them. Ordinarily it would have been good news and a wonderful thing to have your money returned to you! Let me ask you this: Wouldn't you like to go down to your favorite supermarket to do your weekend grocery shopping, load up several of those great big carts and buy for your whole family; then wouldn't you like to open up your grocery sack at home and

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find that they had given you back all of the money you had paid for the groceries? Do you think that would be bad news to you? Especially, would it worry you if you learned that the grocer was giving this to you as a gift from him? Don't we all agree that under ordinary circumstances that would be good news? We would actually take it as an encouragement.

Well, it wasn't that for these men. They already feel that they are in hot water with this hard-boiled ruler down there in Egypt who has made it so difficult for them. This only adds to their concern.

We may wonder why they didn't go back to Egypt immediately. What would you have done under the circumstances? I think they feared they would really be in hot water had they gone back. Then this man would accuse them of stealing the money. They are not taking any chances. They are going on home, intending to bring the money back when they return. – McGee

Gen 42:29-33 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man, who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

Gen 42:34-36 And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

Poor old Jacob! He's not the cocky individual we once knew, nor is he quite the man of faith that we shall see a little later. But he is growing. He is not bragging now but is very pessimistic. He says, "All these things are against me." His son, Joseph, would not have said such a thing, but Jacob is saying it. Joseph would have said the same thing that Paul wrote so many years later: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom_8:28). "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ" (Php_1:6). - McGee

Gen 42:37-38 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. And he said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Jacob's life was wrapped up in the life of this boy Benjamin. You see, Joseph was his favorite because he was the firstborn of his lovely Rachel. Now Joseph is gone, which is a heartbreak to him. Now he faces the chance that he may lose this other son of Rachel, and he says that if this takes place he will die. Very candidly, he would have. His life was absolutely tied up in the life of Benjamin. He is the son of his right hand. He is the walking stick for Jacob. Jacob leans on him. That is what he has been doing these past years; so Jacob says that he will not let him go down to Egypt. In the meantime, poor Simeon is down there cooling his heels in jail! - McGee