

Genesis 42: 1-29, 36-38

Joseph's Brothers Go To Egypt—A Very Moving Story!

“When Jacob [Joseph’s father] learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, ‘Why do you just keep looking at each other?’ He continued, ‘I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.’

Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s [full]brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Jacob’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

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. 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.’

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, ‘You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.’

‘No, my lord,’ they answered. ‘Your servants have come to buy food. We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.’

‘No!’ he said to them. ‘You have come to see where our land is unprotected.’ But they replied, ‘Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.’ Joseph said to them, ‘It is just as I told you: You are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!’ And he put them all in custody for three days.

On the third day, Joseph said to them, ‘Do this and you will live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.’ This they proceeded to do.

They said to one another, ‘Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.’ Reuben replied, ‘Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.’

They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. 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.

Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. 'My silver has been returned,' he said to his brothers. 'Here it is in my sack.' Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, 'What is this that God has done to us?'

When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. Their father Jacob said to them, 'You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!' But Jacob said, 'My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. [Joseph and Benjamin were the only sons of Jacob by his favorite wife, the true love of his life, Rachael!] If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.'

Now the famine was still severe in the land [of Canaan!]. So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, ‘Go back and buy us a little more food.’

But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. But if you will not send him, we will not go down.’ ”

[Jacob, whom God renamed] Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?”

They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here’?”

Then Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.’”

Then their father Israel said to them, ‘If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.’

So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented

themselves to Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ‘Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon.’

The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, ‘We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.’

So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. ‘We beg your pardon, our lord,’ they said, ‘we came down here the first time to buy food. But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.’

‘It’s all right,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.’ Then he brought Simeon out to them.

The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. He asked them how they were, and then he said, ‘How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?’

They replied, ‘Your servant our father is still alive and well.’ And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him. 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.’ 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. After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, ‘Serve the food.’

They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

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NOTE: Indeed this was a MOVING story, because the entire family ended up MOVING to Egypt! This is how the Children of Jacob, whom the Lord renamed Israel, came to be in Egypt, where generations later they again needed rescuing, this time by Moses when they crossed the Red Sea and moved to the Promised Land.

Be sure to see Genesis 45, where Joseph reveals himself to his brothers!!

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