

Genesis 44: 1-18, 33-34 45: 1-25

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

Joseph's brothers, who sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt, found themselves in a famine in their homeland. The brothers came to Egypt in search of food, which was available because a man had the foresight and wisdom to store food during the good times in preparation for days of famine. Unbeknown to the brothers, that man was Joseph, who recognized the brothers, but did not reveal himself immediately to them. At this point of the story, Joseph's brothers are preparing to return to the homeland to their father. In Chapter 45, Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers.

“Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: ‘Fill the men’s sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man’s silver in the mouth of his sack. Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack, along with the silver for his grain.’ And he did as Joseph said.

As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, “Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid good with evil? Isn’t this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.’ ”

When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. But they said to him, “Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! We even brought back to you from the land of

Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

'Very well, then,' he said, 'let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame.'

Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. Joseph said to them, 'What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?'

'What can we say to my lord?' Judah replied. 'What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.'

But Joseph said, 'Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace.'

Then Judah went up to him and said: 'Pardon [me], my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with [me], though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. Now then, please let [me] remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go

back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.'

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, 'Have everyone leave my presence!' So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still living?' But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Come close to me.' When they had done so, he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.'

'So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

‘You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.’

Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.’

“You are also directed to tell them, ‘Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.’ ”

So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels [about 7.5 pounds] of silver and five sets of clothes. And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, ‘Don’t quarrel on the way!’

So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, ‘Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.’ Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, ‘I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’ ”

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The story continues with Jacob (Israel) and the whole family moving to Egypt, where they lived happily ever after—for a few generations anyway! Then, under a different pharaoh, the Children of Israel found themselves in captivity and in need of another rescue, this time by an ordinary man named Moses, called by God to an extraordinary task.

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