

January 16, 2022

“God Preserves a Remnant”
Lesson 3 of Unit

Genesis 45:3-15

Intro

Between the end of last week's lesson in Genesis 41 and today's in Genesis 45, a lot happens! The years of plenty come and go, and all is well. Then the seven years of famine begin, and the people come to Egypt (and Joseph) for help.

The famine reaches all the way to Canaan, over 200 miles away. Jacob sends his older 10 sons to Egypt to buy grain, but keeps Benjamin, the youngest, at home. Benjamin is the only “surviving” son of his favorite wife, Rachel (since Jacob thought that Joseph was dead).

Joseph recognizes his brothers and tests them. He speaks to them through an interpreter, is harsh toward them, has them jailed for three days, forces them to promise to bring Benjamin when they return, and makes it look like they are thieves.

When the brothers return (with Benjamin), Joseph throws a banquet, and more harsh questioning and set-ups follow, part of which is Joseph saying they can return to Canaan, but must leave Benjamin in Egypt. Judah then speaks passionately about how their father would be devastated to have lost both Joseph and now Benjamin, if Benjamin is not allowed to return. So Judah offers to stay so that Benjamin can go back to his father.

At this point, Joseph breaks emotionally, sending out all the Egyptian servants. Today's passage is what follows.

Read Genesis 45:3-15

1. vs. 3: Joseph speaks directly to his brothers, and not through an interpreter
 - This means he must be speaking to them in Hebrew, their native language
 - He declares that he is their brother Joseph
 - The brothers are so astounded they cannot reply
 - This whole situation seems too far-fetched to be believed
 - This is the second-most powerful man in Egypt
 - This just doesn't make sense

2. vs. 4: Joseph sees their doubt and calls for them to come closer to him
 - The brothers don't dare refuse this powerful Egyptian official
 - He repeats his claim of being their brother, but with a twist
 - He gives a piece of information only Joseph and they would know
 - “the one you sold into Egypt!”

3. vs. 5: Joseph's first words to his brothers are words of kindness
They sold Joseph into slavery, but he says, "Do not be distressed"
Joseph sees God's hand at work in what has happened
He also tells them essentially to forgive themselves for what they did
"Do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here"
He has heard what they said when they thought Joseph didn't understand them
They have been carrying a lot of guilt and pain for their actions
Joseph begins by trying to soften their guilt and pain
4. vs. 6: Joseph's warning
The famine will continue for another 5 years, beyond the 2 it's already done
5. vs. 7: Joseph notes two reasons for God allowing these events to happen
First, the longer term reason
"To preserve a remnant (of Abraham's line) on earth
God is protecting Abraham's descendants
He is keeping His promise to Abraham
He is keeping the lineage safe for the line of Christ.
6. vs. 8: Joseph concludes with two things
First, God is and has been in control
It was God who used his enslavement for good
Second, Joseph reminds his brothers of his position
God made Joseph a "father" to Pharaoh
Fathers would ordinarily serve as advisors to the Pharaoh
Joseph being Pharaoh's # 2 makes him a "father to Pharaoh"
God made Joseph to be over Pharaoh's house and Egypt
This means that Joseph can do anything for his family
7. vs. 9: Joseph sends them back to Canaan to bring his father to Egypt
This task has two benefits
It gives the brothers something to do after the shock of finding Joseph alive
It will give Jacob the best news—his "dead" son is alive and in charge of Egypt
Joseph acknowledges God's hand in his life again, giving God the credit
8. vs. 10: Joseph provides the details of what will happen next
Jacob has lived in Canaan his whole life
Abraham came to Canaan over 200 years before
Joseph's plan is for them to live in Goshen
It is a perfect place to raise sheep and cattle
Joseph also explains that he will be living near them
That would be a big selling point to Jacob after all these years
9. vs. 11: Joseph tells the reasons why this is such a good plan, that Jacob should accept it
There are five more years of famine coming
Joseph will make sure they are provided for
If they stay in Canaan, they will likely be poor and starving

10. vs. 12: After telling his brothers of his plans for the future, he encourages them again
“You can see for yourselves...that it is really I who am speaking to you”
Maybe he’s trying to make sure they really believe what he says
They must certainly be amazed and confused at best

Joseph makes the appeal to Benjamin’s knowledge of him

“...and so can my brother Benjamin...”

They would have likely lived together

The other brothers have different mothers than Joseph and Benjamin

Since Rachel died when Benjamin was born, Joseph would be closest to him

They grew up together until Joseph was sold into slavery

Benjamin is the most reliable witness that Joseph is who he says he is

11. vs. 13: Joseph again requests they go to their father
Tell him how I have been honored in Egypt
Bring him here quickly

Joseph cannot go with them; he has job responsibilities in Egypt

“Bring him here quickly” shows how urgently Joseph wants to see his father

12. vs. 14: Joseph can go on no longer
He embraces Benjamin, and weeps
Benjamin does the same

This is proof / confirmation that Joseph is their brother

This also shows the strong connection between Benjamin and Joseph

Joseph hugs Benjamin first

This follows the 5 times greater portion of food Benjamin gets at their feast (43:34)

On their way back to Canaan, Joseph gives the brothers a change of clothes

He gives Benjamin 5 changes of clothes and 300 pieces of silver

13. vs. 15: After Benjamin, Joseph kisses and weeps with all his brothers
They then talk
It must be a long conversation—it has been 22 years since Joseph was sold

Application: There are three main ideas this passage develops:

- 1) Changes: Joseph’s life is full of changes: favored son, slave, head of Potiphar’s house, prisoner, prime minister of Egypt
- 2) Choices: In each of these change situations, Joseph chooses to stay faithful to God and His ways, and to do the best he can in that situation. God blesses this approach in Joseph’s life, and can and will bless our following the same Godly path in our lives.
- 3) Forgiveness: Joseph has had multiple challenging experiences in the last 22 years because his brothers were jealous and sold him into slavery. Instead of getting back at them for it, he forgives them as he sees God’s hand in his life. As we recognize how

much God has forgiven us for the sins we have committed, we are able to forgive others for the things they have done against us.

Prayer: Father God, help us to strive to be more like Joseph, who stayed faithful to you in all circumstances. Like Joseph, help us to do our best for you at all times, and to be willing to forgive those who wrong us, rather than keeping a grudge. In Jesus' name, Amen.