

September 8- Genesis 43-45 Joseph reconciles with his brothers

Chapter 43

When the famine lingered in Canaan, Jacob urged his sons to go again to Egypt to buy more grain for their family. But Judah reminded Jacob of the ordeal they'd experienced when last buying grain in Egypt, how the governor had warned them not to return to Egypt without their youngest brother, Benjamin. And, how when they returned home all of their money was mysteriously at the top of their packs. Judah doesn't want to be accused of being a thief or a liar by returning to Egypt emptyhanded. Israel is still wrestling with the trauma of having already lost Joseph and now Simeon. He casts accusatory questions at his remaining sons: why? Why did you have to mention you had another brother? The sons recounted for Israel how they were only answering the man's questions so that they could get grain for the family. While Israel is still unwilling to send Benjamin, Judah guarantees Israel that no harm will come to the boy by taking an oath of surety, he will act as the guarantor of the boy's safety. He also points out that if Israel had just allowed them to go in the first place they could have gone and come back twice now -poor Simeon!

Israel suggests bringing a variety of choice agricultural gifts for the esteemed governor to sweeten him up. Upon their arrival, Joseph tells the steward to throw a celebratory lunch and invite them to dine with him (a true honor). The brothers thought they were the ones up to be slaughtered, but told the steward everything they knew up front, and to their amazement the steward said "it must have been a blessing from God, in our books you've already paid!" When Joseph finally sees his baby brother he is overcome with emotion and has to leave the room to compose himself before continuing to lunch with them. Joseph sent portions from his own fine table to share with his brothers, but of course Benjamin received 5 times more than any of his other brothers.

Chapter 44

Joseph now hatches a plot to see how much his brothers had truly changed. He tells the steward to place his precious silver cup into Benjamin's bag. The brother's leave none the wiser, until Joseph's men track them down and accuse them of stealing the cup. The brothers, always running off at the mouth, swear their innocence by saying that if the cup is found among them let the one on whom it is found be put to death! Of course, the cup is found on Benjamin, and the brothers eat their words -having cursed yet another little brother. Joseph's men say that it's foolish for him to be put to death, but they will enslave Benjamin for his crimes. Instead of allowing Benjamin to be enslaved and the rest of them returning home (as they had done with Joseph), they return all the way to Egypt to beg for Benjamin's freedom on behalf of their elderly father. In vs. 16, this story comes full circle as they all confess their guilt (God has found out the guilt of your servants) -

they assume this is happening to them as a punishment for what they did to Joseph so many years ago. They all offer to remain as slaves, but Joseph will hear none of it. Judah, the one who had promised to act as surety for Benjamin, explains the family history to Joseph in a way that should have been most compelling and sympathetic (he's his mother's only living son, his father's favorite, our father will die if we don't bring him back to him). Judah offered himself in Benjamin's place to remain as a slave in Egypt so that his little brother could return home.

Chapter 45

Now, at last, Joseph knows that his brothers have truly changed. They're not the same jealous people who condemned him to slavery in his youth. These brothers confess their sins and have their youngest brother's back, to the point of offering themselves in his place. Joseph is overcome by emotion, he sends all the Egyptians away, and reveals himself at last to his long lost family, "I am Joseph!" Understandably, his brothers are dismayed/bewildered by this revelation, so Joseph seeks to console them. He forgives them and explains to them how God used for good what they had done as evil. Had they not sold him to Egypt, Joseph never would have been in the position that he was currently in -a position that allowed him not only to save his own family from starvation, but all the known world! What they had meant for death, God had used to preserve life. Joseph says he now understands that it was God who sent him to Egypt, not his brothers, so that he could continue to keep God's covenant to their family of numerous descendants for Abraham. Because of Joseph, there is a remnant of Hebrews. As the famine was still set to continue for 5 more years, Joseph invited his whole family to settle with him in Egypt, in the land of Goshen -the very best real estate for agriculture. He sends his brothers away to collect their father and families to prepare for the move so that they can be one big family again. Given how honored Joseph was, Pharaoh himself sends Egyptian carts to collect their young and old from Canaan and to receive personal greetings and blessings from the king himself. As Joseph's only full brother, Benjamin receives the very finest gifts from Joseph and the Pharaoh. When the brothers arrived in Canaan and told their father everything that had been revealed, he too was amazed! Rather than going down to Sheol, his spirit was revived! And he set his face toward Egypt to reunite with his beloved Joseph.