

Genesis 45

Joseph's challenge to the brothers has been met. Judah has offered himself as a slave on behalf of Joseph's brother, Benjamin, and has expressed the brothers' regret for their mistreatment of Joseph as well as their deep love for Jacob (44:18-34). Now it is time for Joseph to reveal his identity.

TRANSLATION - 45:1-13:

1 Joseph was not able to control himself before all those standing before him and he called, "Take out every man from before me!" And a man did not stand with him, Joseph, to make himself known to his brothers. **2** And he gave his voice in cries and the Egyptians heard; the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I [am] Joseph, still my father [in] life?" And his brothers were not able to answer him because they were terrified at his face.

4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I [am] Joseph, your brother whom you sold me to the Egyptians. **5** But now, do not be displeased and do not be angry in your eyes because you sold me here because to preserve God sent me before you. **6** Because this two years of famine in the midst of the land and still five years which there is not plowing and harvest. **7** God sent me before you to put you a remnant in the land and to keep you alive for a great deliverance. **8** But now [it was] not you [who] sent me here because God and he put me for a father to Pharaoh and a lord to all his house and a ruler in all the land of Egypt. **9** Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son, Joseph, God put me for a lord over all Egypt. Go down to me! Do not stand [still].' **10** And you will stay in the land of Goshen and you will be near me and your sons and the sons of your sons and your flocks and your cattle and all which [is] yours. **11** And I will nourish you there because five years of famine unless you are impoverished, you and your sons and all which [is] yours. **12** And behold, your eyes are seeing and the eyes of my brother Benjamin that my mouth is speaking to you all. **13** You must announce to my father all my honor in Egypt and all which you have seen and hurry and bring down my father here!"

WORDS:

"To control" (verse 1) was first seen at 43:31. That location and here are the only times in Genesis the verb is used; otherwise, it is found seven times in the Old Testament. "To be terrified" (verse 3) is found 39 times, especially in Psalms and the wisdom literature. Here is the only place it is used in Genesis. "To be displeased" (verse 5) was first used of God in 6:6 and was seen again in 34:7. This is its last use in Genesis. It means to be "hurt, pained, grieved, rebuked, worried, or distressed." It is used 15 times. "To be angry in your eyes" detonates the idea of being angry with themselves. The verb "to be angry" is used frequently in Genesis, beginning at 4:5-6. It is used 93 times in the OT. The related noun "anger" or "fury" is used 41 times. "To preserve" is related to the word "alive" or "life." This is its only use in Genesis, out of 8 times in the OT. "Plowing" (verse 6) is only used three times, only here in Genesis. "Harvest" was first used at 8:22. It is found 49 times; the verb is found 36 times. "Remnant" (verse 7) is only used here in Genesis, out of 66 times. The word comes to refer to the small number of Israelites remaining faithful to God. It is used with this connotation in the prophets, 37 times in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. "Deliverance" was seen first at 32:9. It is used 28 times in the Bible. The verb can carry the idea of "to save." "Nourish" (verse 11) is found here and at 47:12. It means to "comprehend, contain, sustain, support, or endure." It is used 38 times. "To be impoverished" is found 232 times. It is the main verb meaning "to inherit, take possession of." Yet, in certain verbal forms, it means "to dispossess, impoverish."

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Goshen” (verse 10) was certainly in the delta area of the eastern Nile River but its exact location is unknown. In 47:11, it will be designated the “land of Rameses.”

COMMENTS:

Joseph had earlier been able to control himself (43:31) but Judah’s impassioned speech in which he offers himself as a slave in place of Benjamin (44:18-34), more for the sake of Jacob than Benjamin, was too much for Joseph. He had to have all the Egyptians leave the room. He needed privacy with his brothers as he “raised the curtain” on his identity. As far as the text goes, he weeps first (vs 2). He wept so loudly, the Egyptians outside Joseph’s house heard him and news quickly reaches Pharaoh’s house.

“I am Joseph!” are his first words. He has already been informed that Jacob is alive (44:34) but he asks the question again, out of a feeling of excitement he may yet get to see his beloved dad again. At one time, he had named his son Manasseh, because God had made him forget his troubles and his father’s household (41:51). But, he really did want to see his dad again. His brothers were speechless. They were shocked. Terrified. Dismayed. They had believed he was dead, which is what Judah had said at 44:20.

So, Joseph has his brothers come even closer, perhaps to get a better look at him or to hear his voice more clearly through the tears. He is speaking to them, now, without an interpreter, in their own language (vs 13). “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.” They shared a history. They knew him and he knew them. Yet, Joseph moves very quickly to inform them how he viewed the matter. Four times Joseph emphasizes that God was behind the scenes, working to preserve lives through Joseph’s hands (45:5, 7, 8, 9). Joseph encourages his brothers not to be angry with themselves (“in their eyes”) because they sold him. God “sent” him there to preserve life. Here is an illustration of the biblical presentation of the providence of God. God’s providence refers to God working in the lives of mankind without directly controlling affairs; that is, without using miracles to accomplish His plans.

Joseph informs his brothers that there are still five years left of this horrific famine (vs 6), out of a total of seven. Since Joseph was 30 years old when he first stood before Pharaoh (41:46) and the seven years of bounty have already passed, plus the first two years of famine, then Joseph is now 39 years old. Joseph’s point is that his family cannot keep traveling back and forth between Canaan and Egypt to buy food. He is leading up to the suggestion that his family simply move to Egypt.

In verse 7, Joseph emphasizes that God is working, through Joseph and the work in Egypt, to preserve life, to preserve a “remnant” in the land. Through Joseph and the food supply in Egypt, God is going to keep Jacob’s family alive “by a great deliverance.”

For the third time, Joseph emphasizes it was God who placed Joseph in charge of Egypt. God sent Joseph to “rule” over Egypt (vs 8). The brothers had asked, sarcastically in response to his dreams, if he would “rule” over them (37:8)! Now, we find the answer is “yes.” God had made Joseph a “father” to Pharaoh, a trusted advisor. Egyptians used a similar term to refer to such men. Again, God had made Joseph “lord” of Pharaoh’s household and “ruler” of all the land of Egypt. In other words, Joseph has considerable power and influence in Egypt.

In verse 9, Joseph encourages his brothers to hurry quickly back to Canaan and inform Jacob of all they had seen and experienced. The first word out of Joseph’s mouth in verse 9 is “God.” God had put Joseph in charge of Egypt. Jacob and the rest of the Israelite family needed to come down to Egypt without delay.

He will set them in the land of Goshen, a fertile area to the east of the Nile in the delta area. That way, they would be near Joseph with their whole families for their preservation. Joseph will provide for them (vs 11) because, he repeats, there are still five years of severe famine to come. If they don’t come to Egypt, where preparations have been made, they will be impoverished.

They are eyewitnesses of Egypt’s bounty, including Joseph’s role in Egypt (vs 12), including his dear brother, Benjamin. Again, in verse 13, he insists they leave immediately and tell Jacob of Joseph’s “splendor, glory, honor” in Egypt and bring Jacob down as soon as possible.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - "To preserve life" was used relative to the flood in 6:19-20 and 7:3. Joseph will use it again at 50:20. God is working out His plan to save man from his sins. At this point in history, God must save His chosen people from a severe 7-year famine. So, He is bringing them down to the fertile lands of Egypt. God does not always take away the catastrophe but He will work to provide support to His followers.

Contemporaries of Moses - The fear the brothers felt here is felt by the Israelites themselves at the Red Sea (Exo. 15:15).

Later Hebrew writers - We see this same fear expressed in Judges 20:41.

NT writers - Jesus teaches us that we need to forgive if we desire to receive forgiveness: Matt. 6:14-15; 18:34-35; Rom. 1:31; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; James 2:13.

TRANSLATION - 45:14-20:

14 Then he fell on the neck of Benjamin, his brother, and he wept and Benjamin wept on his neck. **15** And he kissed all his brothers and he wept on them and afterwards thus they spoke his brothers with him.

16 And the voice was heard in the house of Pharaoh, saying, "Joseph's brothers came," and it pleased in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants. **17** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, saying, "To your brothers, this do: 'Load your beasts and go, come to the land of Canaan. **18** And take your father and your houses and come to me and I will give to you the good land of Egypt and you all will eat the fat of the land. **19** Even you, are commanded this do: Take for yourselves from the land of Egypt wagons for your little ones and for your wives and bring your father and come! **20** And do not let your eye be upset at your supplies because good all the land of Egypt; for you it [is]."

WORDS:

"Neck" (verse 14) is used 41 times. "To weep" (verse 14) is seen frequently in the life of Joseph as we have noted at 42:24. There are seven references to Joseph weeping. We might call him the "weeping patriarch" as Jeremiah is called the "weeping prophet." The verb is used a total of 114 times. "It pleased" (verse 16) is the verb form of the adjective "good."

"Beasts" (verse 17) is a rare word (6 times) used as a synonym for "animal." "Wagons" (verse 19) is spelled the same (different vowels) as "calf." This word is used 25 times. See comment below under "Archeology." "Do not let be upset" (verse 20) translates "to pity, look upon with compassion, spare." It is used 24 times, only here in Genesis.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

These "wagons" are probably large wagons, or carts with two wheels, pulled by oxen. Female donkeys were useful for their milk production.

COMMENTS:

Joseph, himself, has given a passionate speech (verses 4-13) and now we see the brothers' reaction. Joseph specifically "fell" on Benjamin's neck, indicating the passionate embrace he gave Benjamin around the neck and they each wept in the other's arms. They also kissed each other and the brothers wept as well. Finally, verse 14 says the brothers talked with him. Up until this point, they have been speechless in unbelief. Yet we still do not have any words of the brothers recorded.

Pharaoh either comes to Joseph's house or sends word through his servants that Joseph has his permission to follow through with Joseph's plans. In fact, Pharaoh promises that if they can bring Jacob down to Egypt, Pharaoh himself will provide the "best" of the land of Egypt and they can eat the "fat," the best of the land. We presume Pharaoh is referring to the end of the five years of famine. Otherwise, they would still be living from the supplies Joseph has stored.

Pharaoh wants the sons of Israel to take wagon loads of supplies back to Canaan. Not only will they provide for the Israelites' families in the short term, but the wagons themselves can be used to bring supplies from Canaan back to Egypt. What cannot be transported (vs 19) can be purchased or provided in Egypt. Again, Pharaoh promises (vs 19) the best of the land of Egypt for Israel.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Joseph is now able to freely weep in front of his brothers as he expresses his deepest love for his brother, Benjamin. The sound and the news reaches Pharaoh's ears so that he lavishes his blessings on the brothers as well as Jacob, fulfilling God's promise from Genesis 12:1-3. God is providing for His people, through the instrumentality of the Egyptians.

Contemporaries of Moses - Moses' readers would remember that God had promised Abraham in 15:13-16 that Israel would be strangers in a foreign land. That foreign land, they know, is Egypt. Here is Pharaoh's invitation for Israel to come down into Egypt, which they will do gladly. They will not leave so gladly hundreds of years later.

TRANSLATION - 45:21-28:

21 So the sons of Israel did thus and Joseph gave them wagons by the mouth of Pharaoh and he gave them provisions for the way. **22** To all of them, he gave to a man changes of garments and to Benjamin, he gave six hundred [pieces] of silver and five changes of garments. **23** And to his father he sent ten donkeys carrying from the good of Egypt and ten female donkeys carrying grain and bread and provision to his father for the way.

24 And he sent his brothers and they went and he said to them, "Do not be angry on the way." **25** And they went up from Egypt and they came to the land of Canaan to Jacob, their father. **26** And they reported to him saying, "Joseph still [in] life," and that "he is ruling in all the land of Egypt" and he was stunned in his heart because he did not trust them.

27 So they spoke to him all the words of Joseph which he spoke to them and he saw the wagons which Joseph sent to carry him and the spirit of Jacob revived, their father. **28** Then Israel said, "Only yet Joseph, my son, is [in] life! Let me go and let me see him before I die!"

WORDS:

"Provision" (verse 21) comes from the verb "to hunt" (used 17 times) and is related to the noun "hunter" (used 14 times). This word, provision or food, is used 10 times, in Genesis at 27:3; 42:25; 45:21. To "give by the mouth" (a literal translation) means to provide at the command of or by the permission of Pharaoh. "Provision" (verse 23) is a different word than that used in verse 21. This word is only used twice: here and 2 Chron. 11:23. "Be angry" (verse 24) is a different verb than that used at verse 5. This verb, used 41 times, means to "shake, tremble, be agitated, perturbed, be excited or upset." It is used only here in Genesis. "To be stunned" (verse 26) is only used four times in Scripture. It means to "turn cold, grow weary, faint, or be powerless." "Heart" was first seen back at 6:5-6. By one spelling (*lb*), it is used 252 times. By another (*lbb*), it is used 854 times. "To trust" (verse 26) was found first at 15:6 (See comments there, where it referred to trusting God). It is used 97 times, three times in Genesis (42:20 is the other). It is related to "truth" (127 times) and "amen, surely" (30 times). "Spirit" (verse 27) was first seen at 1:2, where it referred to the Spirit of God. Here, it is Jacob's spirit. "To revive" (verse 27) is related to the verb "to live." It is used 283 times, 59 times in Genesis.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

We have seen the phrase "sons of Israel" used before (32:33; 42:5). In Genesis, certainly, it refers to Jacob's boys. But it becomes the standard phrase for the nation of Israel.

COMMENTS:

The “sons of Israel” (vs 21) do just what Pharaoh and Joseph have told them to do. By the “mouth” (literally), or the command of Pharaoh, Joseph provides for the brothers for their journey. As an expression of love, trust, loving loyalty, and forgiveness, Joseph provides changes of clothes. In a culture where clothes were made by hand from beginning to end, this was a tremendous gift. Reflecting portions of food which were five times more than the brothers (43:34), Joseph gives Benjamin five changes of clothes.

Then he also included some gifts specifically directed at his father: ten donkeys loaded with gifts from Egypt and ten female donkeys load with grain and bread and provisions for Jacob’s trip to Egypt. Female donkeys were particularly helpful for the milk they provided. After having loaded all the brothers with gifts, he sends them back to Canaan and urges them not to “be angry” or “quarrel” on the way home. It would be easy to imagine the brothers throwing recriminations at each other all the way home! They surely did not know how Jacob would respond when he learns Joseph was, in fact, alive - would Joseph yet get revenge by telling Jacob what had happened in the fields of Dothan (37:25-28)?

The brothers arrived in Canaan and informed Jacob that Joseph was alive and is the ruler over Egypt, all the land of Egypt (including Goshen where Joseph wants them to settle). Jacob was “stunned” in his heart. He could not trust that message. He had lived 22 years believing that Joseph was dead. How many times had he relived the moment he sent Joseph to see about his brothers (37:13)? How many times had he regretted that decision? How many times had he relived the moment he first saw Joseph’s precious coat soaked in blood?

But the sons give Jacob further explanation about what had happened, sharing all the things Joseph had said to them. Of course, the wagons and donkeys carrying loads of gifts and supplies from Egypt was very persuasive! Finally, Jacob’s spirit came back alive (literally); he “revived.” And Israel expresses one last wish: to see his son Joseph still alive. Once he sees Joseph, he will be prepared to die.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Jacob expects to die not long after he arrives in Egypt but he actually lives another 17 years in Egypt (47:28)!

Later Hebrew writers - We noted above under “Words” that *remnant* came to be used by the prophets, primarily Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, to refer to the few Israelites who did not give themselves to idolatry but remained faithful to God. They would read the story of Joseph and be reminded that God’s providence guides the way to faithfulness, provisions, and blessings, if the remnant will remain faithful to God.

NT writers - The Christian, on reading the story of Joseph, is reminded that all things will work together for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28).