

Genesis 42 Joseph's Brothers Go to Egypt (JBGtE) Episode 1

JBGtE: CONTROL, CONSCIENCE, AND CIRCUMSTANCE

Brief Ancient Egypt History

Old Kingdom

Pyramids/ mummies / great wealth

Middle Kingdom

Enlarged land/ Nubia-southern Egypt

Invasion by Hyksos from Canaan- new composite bows, horses, war chariots

New Kingdom

Used weapons from Hyksos and expelled them

By military victories they doubled the size of kingdom

Golden Age of Egypt



42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” ² 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.”

³ Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. ⁵ So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

How did Jacob learn about food in Egypt? Why send 10 sons? Why not send Benjamin?

⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.”

⁸ Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹ Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

¹⁰ “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

¹² “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

¹³ 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.”

¹⁴ Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies! ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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!” ¹⁷ And he put them all in custody for three days.

Why did Joseph immediately recognize the 10 brothers, but they did not recognize him? What dream was Joseph referring to? Why did he accuse them of being spies? Why did he do this three times? Why did he have them all thrown into prison?

¹⁸ On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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.

Why did Joseph tell them, “for I fear God”? Why did Joseph demand to have the youngest brother brought to him?

²¹ 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.”

²² 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.” ²³ They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

²⁴ 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.

What is happening to the brothers’ consciences now? Why is Reuben now trying again to defend his failed actions and how did Joseph respond?

²⁵ 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, ²⁶ they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ “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?”

Why are they so worried about the money in their sacks? Why is the first time the brothers bring God into the equation?

²⁹ When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, ³⁰ “The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. ³¹ But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. ³² We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’

³³ “Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, ‘This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. ³⁴ But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.’”

What appears to be different this time when the brothers returned to Jacob with one less member of the family?

³⁵ As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. ³⁶ 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!”

Why are they all frightened from finding the silver? Isn’t Jacob a little pessimistic about life at the moment? Where is God mentioned in all this?

³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”

³⁸ But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

What do you think of Reuben’s pledge and promise? What do we make of Jacob’s response? And why is he being called Jacob in this story and not Isreal?

What Lessons can we take from our first episode of Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt?

CONTROL: Continual Divine Providence

Event after event is woven into place concerning Joseph and Israel. Nothing is outside the Divine Purpose and everything is made to serve into it. Whether it is the lack of food for Jacob, the returned memories/ guilty conscience of the brothers, or the opportunity of showing mercy in Joseph. Everything tends to reveal the loving kindness of God and demonstrates His Plan for them all. We must hold onto the truth that our Heavenly Father has a plan for our lives and that despite all the immediate circumstances around us, the plan is meant for our good. God is in control.

CONSCIENCE: Guilty Conscience and True Repentance

“The greatest punishment that a man can suffer is that which is within and comes from a consciousness of guilt.”

A guilty conscience can be a powerful thing. For Joseph's brothers, the marvelous way in which circumstances combined to recall with intensity the events of over the past twenty years is one of the most striking and significant features of this story. A wonderful chain of simple events led to the revelation of sin in the brothers. They, like us, had choices to deal with their sins and guilty conscience. In this story we see remorse and sorrow of the brothers for what they had done to Joseph twenty years ago. But is remorse and sorrow enough? Having a guilty conscience and confession of sins is not true repentance. Altered character and changed behavior more likely will demonstrate true repentance. Joseph saw their changed minds as to the past, but he was wondering about their actions in the future, thus he challenged them with the tests. Joseph could not see their change of heart until they returned to him later on, but we are able to see a change in the brothers when they retold their story of their time in Egypt to Jacob.

Repentance is both a change of mind as to the past, which we would call **penitence**; and is also a change of will as to the future and which we would call **obedience**.

CIRCUMSTANCE: "Everything is against me!"

He (Jacob) said "All these things are against me," and that is what we say as we continue to be occupied solely with circumstances. If, however, we would but look up above circumstances, we should see things as they really are, and thus be able to cry out with the Apostle, "All things work together for good." And we should say this because of our strong confidence that "all things are yours." The message is therefore clear. We must look up to God through and beyond circumstances. It was when Peter took his eyes off Christ and occupied his attention with the waves that he lost his faith and began to sink. Circumstances are only things that "stand round" us and they can never do more than this. They do not shut out the sky or "stand over" us; and if only our gaze is ever fixed on God, and we believe to see the goodness of the Lord in spite of circumstances, we shall never be put to confusion.

Rest in the Lord, my soul; Commit to Him thy way.

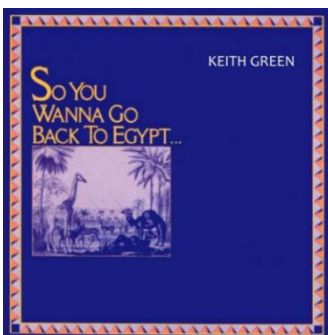
What to thy sight seems dark as night, to Him is bright as day.

Rest in the Lord, my soul; He planned for thee thy life,

Brings fruit from rain, brings good from pain, and peace and joy from strife.

Rest in the Lord, my soul; This fretting weakens thee.

Why not be still? Accept His will; Thou shalt His glory see.



What's gonna happen next???

Stay tuned for Episode 2 of JBGTE next week!!!