

JBG_{TE} EPISODE 4: THE R'S OF THE REVELATION

Genesis 45 Joseph Makes Himself Known

Last week in Chapter 44 we had Judah's intercession for Benjamin; Joseph let him go on without interruption, heard all he had to say, and then answered it all in one short statement, "I am Joseph." Now he found his brothers humbled for their sins, mindful of Joseph (for Judah had mentioned him twice in his speech), respectful to their father, and very tender of their youngest brother, Benjamin. They were ready for the comfort he desired for them, by making himself known to them, which is the theme of this chapter.

Reveal and Recognition: *45 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. ² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. ³ 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. ⁴ 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!"*

When Joseph finally is convinced of the transformation that has taken place in his brothers, he reveals himself to them. This is one of the Bible's most intensely emotional scenes: It portrays Joseph weeping so loudly that people hear it in the next room, and Joseph's brothers are speechless with terror and guilt. Though the moment ends with embraces and kissing, years later the brothers are still afraid of revenge (50:15).

The first statement he makes, "I am Joseph" is logical enough, but the next one seems odd: "Is my father still living?" The brothers have been speaking all along of the actions and statements of Jacob. They have reported on Jacob's involvement up to the very moment of their departure.

Why would Joseph have everyone removed from the room when he revealed himself to his brothers? Why ask such a question, "Is my father still living?". What made Joseph's brothers terrified at his presence? How did he convince them he was the brother Joseph?

Reassurance: *⁵ 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. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ "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.*

Was Joseph excusing what his brothers had done?

RECAP:

The old, lingering rivalry between Joseph and his brothers comes to a dramatic climax in this chapter. First, a famine forces Joseph's brothers from their homeland to Egypt, a country that, thanks to

Joseph, has prepared for the emergency. There the brothers must deal with Joseph, a powerful Egyptian official, whom they no longer recognize. A long, anguished struggle of the heart ensues.

Joseph has a choice to make. He can make up with his brothers on the spot, welcoming them with open arms. Or he can take revenge by ordering their executions. He does neither. Instead he begins a series of elaborate tests: He demands things from them, plays tricks on them, accuses them. For nearly two years he plays these games. The ordeal wears down his brothers, provoking confusion, fear and flashbacks of guilt over their treatment of their younger brother long ago. "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" (42:21). Fortunately for them, Joseph has no interest in revenge, for he now sees his difficult years as part of God's big picture. At long last he is ready to forgive and to welcome them all to the haven of Egypt. Reconciliation heals old wounds and brings peace at last to the troubled family of Jacob.

Joseph, too, feels great emotional strain, the strain of forgiveness. He wants to reconcile with his brothers, whom he loves, but to do so is excruciatingly difficult. And until they admit and accept their guilt, true reconciliation cannot occur. Five times Joseph breaks down in tears, once with cries loud enough to be overheard in the next room.

The story of Joseph and his brothers encourages us to recognize the sovereignty of God in the affairs of life and to trust His promises no matter how dark the day may be. "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." (Prov. 19:21). God sent Joseph to Egypt so that Jacob's family could be preserved, and the nation of Israel be born and ultimately give the Word of God and the Savior to the world. Without realizing it, Joseph's brothers were helping the Lord fulfill His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

Relocation: ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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.'

¹² "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³ Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

Why did Joseph want his family to move to Egypt?

Region of Goshen (45:10). In Egyptian texts the heaviest concentrations of Semites occurs in the eastern Delta region closest to Canaan. This corresponds to the biblical texts in which the region of Goshen is equated to the district of Ramesses (47:11), which is certainly in the Delta region. In the early chapters of Exodus, this is the location of the Israelite labors and towns such as Pithom and Ramesses.

The chosen family, once facing the abyss of starvation and hopelessness, is now provided with the abundance of the best of the land (vv. 18, 20). God has intervened again to change the fortunes of Israel and to prosper the covenant he made with the patriarchs.



Reconciliation: ¹⁴ Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

It wasn't a time for explanations and excuses but for honest expressions of love and forgiveness. Joseph embraced his brothers and kissed them, especially Benjamin, and they all wept together. Because hidden sin had been exposed and dealt with, and forgiveness had been granted.

Why is Benjamin singled out? What do you think the significance of "Afterward his brothers talked with him"?

Royal Reward: ¹⁶ When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ 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.' ¹⁹ "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. ²⁰ Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"

Why would Pharaoh respond in this way? What do you think about "some carts" if Pharaoh says, "Never mind about your belonging."?

Return: ²¹ So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. ²² To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels^[b] of silver and five sets of clothes. ²³ 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.

Any significance to the new clothing? Why did Benjamin get so much more? What about all the gifts for Jacob?

Request: ²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!"

Why did Joseph think his brothers might quarrel?

"Quarrel" is the translation most commonly used, but the Hebrew term does not mean that anywhere else. Its normal sense expresses someone getting "worked up" or "agitated" in a wide variety of different ways, such as anger, excitement, fear, anxiety, joy, or sadness. It has little to do with arguing. Joseph anticipates that his brothers may be fearful that he will have second thoughts and send an army after them — perhaps again accusing them of plundering and thievery and then slaughter them all.

Revival: ²⁵ So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶ They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob was happy to see his sons safely home again, especially Benjamin, about whom he had been particularly concerned. But Jacob wasn't prepared for the incredible report that (1) Joseph was alive, (2) he was the second ruler of Egypt, (3) he wanted the whole family to move to Egypt, and (4) he would care for all of them. How much good news can an old man handle in one day?

The news was too good to believe, but he couldn't deny the presence of the carts that Joseph had sent and the extra animals to carry the burdens and draw the carts. Plus, there was all the riches of Egypt on the donkeys. His spirit revived as he contemplated seeing Joseph and having his united family around him until he died. He was 130 years old when he went to Egypt (47:9) and he died at 147, which means he had seventeen years in which to enjoy the family, especially Joseph and the two grandchildren he had never seen before.

The sovereign God has overruled the plots of sinners and accomplished His will for Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers. For the next four centuries, the Jews will be in Egypt, first as honored guests and then as suffering slaves, but through it all, God will mold them into the nation they needed to be in order to do what He wanted them to do.

Revelation: Metaphor or Type of Revelation of Jesus Christ:

The fulness of the revelation: Joseph's manifestation to his brothers was the revealing of one whom they had rejected; but one whose love had remained all through the years and had now conquered. Jesus also was the one rejected. He also loved us for all eternity and now has conquered sin and death for us so that we can live.

The method of the revelation: It was in a private setting when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. When Christ reveals himself to the soul is one of the most private experiences. It was a personal revelation, "I am Joseph". So it is with us, the spiritual revelation is not of a truth, or an institution, or a philosophy; but a Divine, living, loving Person- Jesus Christ. Lastly, it was affectionate. Joseph kissed and hugged his brothers to verify the feelings he had towards them. God brings his persistent, everlasting, overwhelming love to each believer.

The power of the revelation: Joseph, even after all what the brothers had done, was loving and generous towards them. There was no word of reproach or rebuke, but only of encouragement and cheer. This is like God's method of manifesting Himself to the sinner. There is no reproach on the part of God; but it is the sinner who learns to reproach himself as he becomes conscious of the love of God towards him.

The outcome of the revelation: It brought peace, protection and plenty to the brothers and the family of Jacob. Reconciliation with God brings peace, protection and provisions to us as believers.

The responsibility of the revelation: The brothers were given a commission. They were not to keep this good news to themselves but to go back at once and tell their father three things: 1) that Joseph was alive 2) that Joseph was in an exalted position 3) that Joseph was willing to receive his father and all of them. Sound familiar to any commission we may have today? To go far and near and proclaim that Jesus is alive; that He is exalted to be Lord and Savior; and the He is willing to receive all that come to Him.