



Family Reunion Genesis 45-46

Introduction

Joseph had tested his brothers and had been deeply moved by Judah's plea. The sincerity of Judah's repentance and tenderness of his affection toward both Benjamin and their father touched Joseph's heart. The trial of testing had no doubt been difficult for Joseph, but he had seen the need to recreate a situation similar to the one in which he had been sold as a slave to Ishmaelite traders. Joseph had placed his brothers once again in a position of power over the life and death of a favored son of their father. The brothers' response, culminating in Judah's poignant plea, demonstrated their love and loyalty toward Benjamin. Joseph was assured that a change had taken place in the hearts of his brothers.

The profound sincerity and tenderness of Judah's plea left Joseph overcome with emotion, setting the stage for reconciliation and a reuniting of Jacob's family.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 45-46

I. Joseph Reveals His Identity - Genesis 45:1-15

II. Pharaoh Issues His Invitation - Genesis 45:16-24

III. Jacob Receives the Good News - Genesis 45:25-28

IV. Jacob Journeys to Egypt - Genesis 46:1-34

I. Joseph Reveals His Identity - Genesis 45:1-15

Joseph, unable to restrain the emotion which welled up within him, ordered the room cleared so he could reveal himself to his brothers in private. Yet his weeping was so uncontrollable that the Egyptians overheard.

A. Brothers' Stunned Silence - Genesis 45:1-4

Finally Joseph made his identity known and, with deep concern, asked about his father. Joseph's brothers were so shocked at his announcement that they could not speak. Joseph asked them to come near so they could recognize him more clearly and hear his pronouncement of the sovereignty of God.

B. Joseph's Profession of God's Sovereignty - Genesis 45:5-15

In this magnificent passage, Joseph explained God's

providential control of all that had happened in his life. He explained that it was not his brothers but God who had ordered all that had taken place. Four times Joseph appealed to the sovereignty of God in both past and present circumstances of his life (verses 5, 7, 8, 9). His brothers had sold him into Egypt, but in reality it was the hand of God sending him to "*preserve a remnant*" (NASB), to keep the family of Israel alive so that God could fulfill his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7; 28:4; 46:3-4).

Later on the prophets would use this same term, "*remnant*", to affirm that God would always preserve a people for Himself (Isaiah 10:20-21; Jeremiah 23:3; Micah 2:12-13) as He promised in Leviticus 26:44, "*I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God*". The concept of "*remnant*" is of great theological significance and is used by the apostle Paul in Romans 11:5 in a spiritual sense relating to God's gracious plan of redemption for His people.

1. Joseph's faith - 45:5-9

The heart of the matter is revealed in Acts 4:28 which states that God does whatever His hand and His purpose has determined beforehand to be done. Bruce K. Waltke (Genesis) states it this way, "God directs the maze of human guilt to achieve His good and set purposes. Such faith establishes the redemptive kingdom of God."

In summary, Joseph saw by faith that what his brothers had meant for evil against him, God meant for good (Genesis 50:20). Furthermore, it was God who had exalted him to his high position in Egypt. Joseph recognized God's providential care in his life and the sovereignty of God in all circumstances.

Application

"Faith lifted the whole sordid crime of the brothers out of the pit of misery and self-recrimination and placed it on the mountain peak of divine sovereignty, where God's forgiving grace not only wipes away the past but also heals the wounds inflicted by sin of bygone days" (Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament). What past sins, either committed or inflicted and endured, will you lift to God today? Will you humbly submit to Him and allow Him to wipe away the past and heal the wounds?

2. Joseph's care for his family - 45:10-15

In great eagerness to see his father again, Joseph instructed his brothers to “*hurry*”, “*do not tarry*” to return to Canaan and bring their father, families, flocks and herds to him in Egypt.

a. Promises made - 45:10-13

Joseph promised to provide for all of Jacob's family during the remaining five years of famine. He would settle them in the land of Goshen, a fertile grazing region located in the eastern section of the Nile Delta.

b. Affection displayed - 45:15-15

Joseph and Benjamin displayed their joy at being reunited. The only two sons of Jacob's wife, Rachel, embraced and wept. It was only after Joseph kissed and wept over each of his brothers that they finally recovered enough to speak.

II. Pharaoh Issues His Invitation - Genesis 45:16-24

When Pharaoh heard of Joseph's plan, he endorsed it wholeheartedly and extended true eastern hospitality to Joseph's family. He offered them the best he had, even the provision of wagons to carry their families and supplies.

The brothers willingly accepted Pharaoh's offer along with generous gifts from Joseph. They returned home with “*ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt*” plus “*grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey.*”

Joseph's last words to his brothers as they left to fetch their father were, “*See that you do not become troubled along the way.*” Joseph's admonition refers to disagreements and quarreling. He had forgiven his brothers and they now needed to forgive one another. John MacArthur (The MacArthur Bible Commentary) notes that the brothers would “have so much sin to think about as they readied their confession to their father.”

III. Jacob Receives the Good News - Genesis 45:25-28

Imagine Jacob's joy at his sons' return! They not only brought Benjamin safely home, but Simeon as well. Scripture records that when his sons told Jacob that Joseph was alive and governor over all of Egypt, “*Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them.*” Jacob was in shock. He had been grieving the loss of Joseph

for over twenty years. The news seemed just too good to be true. Jacob could not allow himself to believe. After all, he had suffered from his sons' deception and malice before. But when Jacob heard the whole story and saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry them to Egypt, his spirit revived and he believed. This precious return to trusting in God prompted the use of Jacob's new name once again. “*Israel said, It is enough, Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.*”

Application

Jacob's life had been filled with deception and mountains and valleys of belief and unbelief. It seems that he always had difficulty believing without seeing. It was not until he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent from Egypt that his faith revived. It is probable that Jacob had never seen a wagon before, much less a royal wagon like Pharaoh's. Just the fact that it was so out of the ordinary must have had a profound effect upon him and convinced him that something of great importance was happening.

When Jacob saw, then Jacob believed. Are you like Jacob? Must you see to believe? Even Jesus' disciples struggled with the concept of believing without seeing (John 4:48; 16:30.) But Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:29). The book of Hebrews warns that without faith it is impossible to please God “*for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (11:6). The apostle Peter tells us that believing without seeing brings “*an inexpressible and glorious joy*” (1 Peter 1:8, NIV). How pure and precious do you consider your faith to be? Do you believe in circumstances, or do you believe in God and His sovereignty? Will you now choose to rise above your circumstances and put your faith in God so you may experience “*inexpressible and glorious joy*”? Will you praise God because He is in control?

IV. Jacob Journeys to Egypt - Genesis 46:1-34

Jacob took “*all that he had*” and set off for Egypt. Presumably Jacob had not moved from Hebron, his home at the time Joseph had disappeared (Genesis 37:14). His first stop was Beersheba, about twenty-five miles down the road, where he stopped to worship God.

A. Jacob Offers Sacrifices to God - Genesis 46:1-4

Beersheba was the site where Abraham had planted a tamarisk tree and “*called on the name of the Lord*” (Genesis 21:33). Years later, after God had appeared to Isaac, he had built an altar there and “*called on the name of the Lord*” (Genesis 26:23-25). It may have been upon this very altar that Jacob offered his sacrifices.

1. Jacob's possible hesitation - Genesis 15:14 and 26:2

Jacob was probably familiar with God's revelation to Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign nation for four hundred years (Genesis 15:13-16). He also must have known of God's warning his father, Isaac, not to go to Egypt (Genesis 26:2). Uprooting his entire family and leaving the land which God had promised may have been extremely difficult for Jacob in spite of his eagerness to see his long-lost Joseph.

2. God's promises - Genesis 46:2-4

God was gracious to ease Jacob's fears and encourage him on his journey. God called to Jacob *"in visions of the night,"* making him a fourfold promise:

- (1) In Egypt, God would make Jacob's family into a "great nation";
- (2) God would go down to Egypt with them;
- (3) God would surely bring them up again;
- (4) Jacob would die peacefully in the presence of his beloved Joseph.

Thus, Jacob was assured of God's will and God's protection in the move to Egypt. Indeed, the move to Egypt was for the protection of God's chosen people. In Egypt, they would be safe from the warring Caananite tribes. They would be safe from intermarriage with pagan peoples since the Egyptians disdained Hebrew shepherds and Jacob's family would be separated in the land of Goshen. Beyond that, in Egypt, Jacob's family would be exposed to civilization, government and law. In this environment, God would make Jacob's small family into a great nation. Bruce Waltke's insight is that "Egypt was the womb God used to form His nation" (The book Genesis - by Bruce Waltke).

Application

It is an encouragement to see that God accomplished all that he had promised. Jacob's family settled in Egypt with seventy men. Four generations later they left and returned to the promised land as a great nation of six hundred thousand men. Jacob died peacefully in Egypt with Joseph at his side. It is noteworthy that Jacob did not experience the promise of leaving Egypt during his lifetime, although his body was taken out of Egypt and buried in the Promised Land. Hebrews 11:13 speaks of the Old Testament faithful as dying *"in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth"*.

Today we live in a world of impatience and desire for instant gratification. When our prayers are not answered we are too quick to sulk, shrink from faith and question

God. Have you embraced God's perfect will for your life along with His promises? Are you content to place your life in His hands for His glory? Ephesians chapter 1 reveals that God's grace abounds toward us *"according to the good pleasure of His will"* and *"to the praise of His glory."*

B. Jacob Travels with His Family - Genesis 46:5-27

1. The sons of Israel - 46:5-7

"Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him." This little band which set out for Egypt was the nucleus of the nation of Israel. They were God's chosen people. Exodus 1:7 relates that during the time of their sojourning in that foreign land, they *"were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them"*. Those who travelled in that caravan were not just the sons of their father, Jacob. They were the sons of a great nation: Israel.

2. The genealogy - 46:8-27

These verses list the names of all the *"children"* of Israel who went to Egypt. It includes the names of each of Jacob's twelve sons and their sons. Dinah and Serah, Jacob's daughter and granddaughter, are also included in verses fifteen and seventeen respectively. The total number of Jacob's immediate and blood related family who travelled to Egypt were sixty-six persons (verse 26). This number did not include Jacob, Joseph, or his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. When they are added to the sixty-six, the total number in Jacob's family when they arrived in Egypt totaled seventy (verse 27). In Acts 7:14, Stephen numbered the family as seventy-five. This would have included Joseph's five grandchildren who were born in Egypt.

The New Geneva Study Bible notes that the covenant family is represented by the symbolic number seventy to show both God's blessing on the family and to anticipate their further expansion into a great nation.

C. Jacob and Joseph are Reunited - Genesis 46:28-34

As they neared Egypt, Judah was sent ahead to carry the news of their arrival. He had proved himself faithful in bringing Benjamin home safely from Egypt and his father now trusted him and leaned upon him as if he were the "firstborn". Judah's leadership in the family among the twelve sons was thus confirmed.

1. Joseph weeps on the neck of his father - 46:29-30

What a dramatic and emotional scene it must have been when Joseph, rode up in his royal chariot and “*presented himself*” to his “*father Israel*”. After years of hopeless grieving, Jacob’s beloved son, whom he thought had been torn to pieces by wild beasts, was standing before him in all the regal splendor of Egypt! God’s grace did surely abound toward Jacob and his family on that day. Father and son embraced and Joseph “*wept on his father’s neck a good while*”. Jacob was so gratified to be reunited with his favored son that he expressed his contentment to Joseph as a willingness to die right then and there, “*since I have seen your face, because you are still alive*”.

2. Joseph instructs his brothers - 46:31-34

Joseph advised his brothers of his intentions for their welfare. His plan was for them to settle in the land of Goshen (Genesis 45:10), a fertile area in northeastern Egypt. It would provide ample room to graze their flocks and herds and also keep them separate from pagan influences of the Egyptian culture. Joseph would explain to Pharaoh that his family had arrived and that they were shepherds. When Pharaoh interviewed the brothers, they were to validate their occupation as shepherds. Thus, Pharaoh would be happy to confirm their settlement in the outlying area of Goshen “*for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.*” Joseph’s instructions to his brothers informed them of the Egyptian caste system which considered shepherds impure. The separation from the Egyptians was necessary but it would establish their independence and work ethic in the eyes of Pharaoh.

Application

1. God’s providence in caring for Israel and his family has been very clear in this chapter. Joseph’s dreams have been fulfilled in a miraculous way and in his position of power and influence, Joseph has been a blessing to his family and a blessing to the nations. It is by submitting to God and trusting in Him that you too may become a blessing to others. In what circumstances will you humbly submit to God right now? Who may God desire to bless through you?

2. Joseph was wise and discerning in planning for the separation and sustenance of his family. The one who had been so poorly treated showed nothing but kindness and care for those who abused him. Who has mistreated you? Will you forgive them now? How will you show God’s love and care to those who need your forgiveness and His?