

GENESIS

Why The Beginning Matters

Study 23

Joseph's Rise and Family Conflict

Genesis 41-45

Genesis 41: Joseph's Rise

Genesis 41:8-14

In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled."

So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:28-40

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

"It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

"And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

1) a) Objective Question. Select all that apply. According to the video lecture, which of the following is true?

- A. In ancient Egypt, the pharaoh's wise men and astrologers, and magicians had books that they would use to interpret dreams
- B. Joseph shaved even though Israelites consider it to be shameful (see 2 Sam 10:4-5)
- C. After being the only one able to interpret the dream which the wise men could not, Joseph additionally hints to Pharaoh that he is the suitable person to carry out the plan for famine
- D. When Pharaoh said, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?", he is referring to Yahweh and implied he converted to Judaism.
- E. Christians should all be like Joseph in the gift of interpreting dreams
- F. If we have a similar dream twice, it means it will happen in reality

Genesis 41:41-52

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure. Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

b) Objective Question. Select all that apply. According to the video lecture, most people will interpret Joseph's rise as God's work and blessing. However, Dr. Kyle proposed some reasons to question this assumption. Which of the following are the reasons?

- A. Joseph became a politician and God doesn't bless politicians
- B. When Joseph was in slavery in Potiphar's house and the prison, the bible mentioned Yahweh was with him, but there is no mention of Yahweh being with Joseph during his rise or during his conflict with the brothers
- C. Every time Joseph's wife is mentioned, her pagan identity is emphasized, that she is the daughter of Potiphara, priest of On, making Joseph the son-in-law of the high priest in Egypt's temple. Nothing in the passage implied Joseph rejected his pagan identity or the new pagan name and the pagan family he marries into
- D. Joseph married someone of a different race, an Egyptian. God only allows marrying within the same ethnicity.
- E. The original audience of this story was the Israelite slaves during the time of Moses, they would feel negative about important Egyptian lords in chariots shouting "Make way!" or "Bend your knees!"
- F. The name of Joseph's two sons implies he is okay with forgetting about his father's roots and that he is fruitful in Egypt, not the promised land
- G. Joseph didn't bother trying to contact Jacob his father and his brother Benjamin although he knows famine is coming

Genesis 42-45: Family Conflict

Genesis 42:6-24

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. 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."

Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

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

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

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

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

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.

2) a) Objective Question. Select all that apply. Which of the following is true?

- A. Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him like they did last time because he looked like an Egyptian and used an interpreter, they also very likely assumed that Joseph was a slave or dead.
- B. Joseph was right to treat his brothers in that manner.
- C. Joseph swore by the Pharaoh's name, showing he is behaving like a Pagan
- D. Book of Genesis teaches that retributive justice isn't how people should act
- E. Joseph was possibly punishing the brothers for what they did to him since Joseph was still affected by it, describing it as affliction and weeping when he heard his brothers' apparent repentance

Genesis 42:35-38

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. 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!”

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.”

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.”

Genesis 44:8-14

Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. 14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

b) Discussion Question. Compare Reuben’s proposal and Judah’s proposal, which was better and why?

Genesis 44:11-20

Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. Joseph said to them, “What is this you have done? Don’t you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?”

“What can we say to my lord?” Judah replied. “What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.”

But Joseph said, “Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace.”

Then Judah went up to him and said: “Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ And we answered, ‘We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother’s sons left, and his father loves him.’

Genesis 44:33-34

“Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.”

c) Discussion Question. Who was the spokesperson of the group and what did he do?

Genesis 45:1-11

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. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.

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.

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

“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. 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. 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. 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.’

Genesis 45:6-20

When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, 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.'

"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. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'

d) Reflection Question. If you were head of the family, would you have left the promised land for Egypt? See also Genesis 15:13-14 to help you answer.

Genesis 15:13-14

Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.

Takeaway

Judah and Joseph underwent many changes. Judah's character has changed from an older brother willing to sell his younger brother into slavery, and from an immoral pagan-like father who lived among the Canaanites to finally recognizing his unrighteousness and being the clear leader of the brothers, willing to sacrifice himself as a substitute for the sake of the family. Their father listens to his suggestion over Reuben, the eldest Brother's suggestion.

Case Study

Case 1 – Betrayal and Forgiveness

Ken and Brendon are twins born to the Young family who owns a billion-dollar company called December Holdings. Their father, Adrian, is an influential man who founded the company during the dot-com boom in the early 2000s.

One day, Adrian was unfortunately caught in a tragic car accident and died. Ken and Brendon were heartbroken and they were forced to command the company after their father's untimely demise.

Despite them being twins, Ken and Brendon cannot be any more different in their

personalities. Ken is an introvert who is a strong thinker, whereas Brendon is an extrovert with a charismatic aura who can easily influence people around him. Additionally, Ken is the only member of the family who is a Christian.

After 3 months, they had issues within the leadership as Ken and Brendon had very differing visions for the business. They often argued with each other during board meetings. This conflict reached a climax when Brendon used his influence to convince the board members to remove his brother from the company altogether, citing irreconcilable differences.

All of Ken's shares in the company were revoked leaving him penniless. Additionally, Brendon charged Ken in court for criminal breach of trust (CBT), resulting in a hefty fine for Ken and 2 years imprisonment. Ken and Brendon became estranged.

7 years later, Brendon becomes a Christian and tries to reconcile with Ken, asking for his forgiveness.

1) a) Discussion question. If you were Ken, should you forgive Brendon? Why or why not?

b) Reflection question. If you were Ken, would you forgive Brendon? Why or why not?

c) Reflection question. There are many categories of issues that other people can hurt us with such as relational, financial, or personal betrayals.

i) List down which ones you have experienced.

ii) Of those you have listed in (a), which do you find most difficult to forgive? Why?

d) Discussion question. Joseph was betrayed by his brethren and sold into slavery. All his sufferings can be traced back to them. Nevertheless, Joseph attributes his experiences to the Lord

i) Read Genesis 45:5, 7. What does Joseph say about the Lord?

ii) Could our sufferings at the hands of others be something that God has placed in our lives for a reason? Why or why not?

e) Discussion question. The Bible has many examples/parables of forgiveness. Give one example of forgiveness besides Joseph in Genesis 45.

Model Answer

[Philemon and his runaway slave, Onesimus]

f) Discussion question. The ultimate display of forgiveness is the cross at Calvary. The Lord Jesus has forgiven us (Col. 1:14). He could even say “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”. How does understanding the forgiveness of our sins help us to forgive others [who have wronged us]?