

Episode: Genesis & Job Series No. 13

Narrator: Benjamin

Primary Scriptures: Genesis 42-50

Story Summary: Joseph's brothers go to Egypt twice; all Israelites move to Egypt

Location: Egypt, Canaan

Time: Joseph's birth is probably 1900-1700 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Genesis 45:7-8, 45:24; 46:4, 46:27; 47:30; 49:10; 50:20

The story of Joseph is one that stresses God's foreknowledge and control. God knew about the time of plenty and the time of famine before they happened. God knew how to make Joseph's slavery contribute to the redemption of his country and family.¹ God knew how long the Hebrews would be in Egypt and he knew how they were going to leave.

God knew the family of Israel, located in Canaan, would have to go to Egypt to get grain if they were to avoid starvation. You can imagine God smiling when he thought about the surprises awaiting the ten brothers when they arrived.

The Bible says the brothers did not recognize Joseph.² That is probably a bit of an understatement. Granted, it had been about twenty years since they had seen him, but that is only part of it. Joseph was probably wearing heavy makeup, had his hair in the Egyptian style, and wearing elaborate Egyptian clothes and a headdress. He looked like an Egyptian, talked like an Egyptian, and probably even walked like an Egyptian. Besides, they probably thought Joseph was dead.

In Joseph's interactions with his brothers, it is hard not to perceive that he punished them for their past actions, almost to point of being a little sadistic. He toyed with them, and with their father, over a pretty long period of time. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers, he made sure to give God the credit for all that had happened. In a little foreshadowing of Jesus, Joseph tells them that God sent him to save their lives by a great deliverance.³

When Joseph extends the invitation to his wealthy family to move to Egypt, it is easy to perceive there were hundreds, if not thousands, of family members. However, there were just over seventy people who moved.⁴ About four centuries later, this entourage will have grown into far more than a million people.⁵

¹ Genesis 50:20

² Genesis 42:8

³ Genesis 45:7

⁴ Genesis 46:26-27

⁵ Exodus 12:37

Discussion Questions:

1. How might this story have changed had Jacob sent Benjamin on the first trip instead of keeping him at home trying to protect him?
2. Do you think Joseph was trying to punish his brothers by putting them in weird positions, or was he trying to teach them a lesson? Did he act differently once he remembered his dreams (Genesis 42:9)?
3. What is ironic about Reuben asking for Jacob to trust him with taking Benjamin to Egypt?
4. What is ironic about Judah convincing Jacob to send Benjamin with them, and Judah having to negotiate with Joseph about keeping Benjamin as a captive?
5. Why did Joseph settle his family in Goshen?
6. Discuss Genesis 46:3-4.
7. Notice Genesis 46:27. Does this number fit your conceptions?
8. Discuss the blessing of Judah in Genesis 49:8-12. How much of this was fulfilled in Jesus?

3. Reuben had slept with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah (Genesis 35:22). That was an incredibly disrespectful act, but surely broke any trust that Jacob could ever have in Reuben. Also, it was Reuben who kept his brothers from killing Joseph (Genesis 37:22) 4. Judah was the one who had the idea to sell Joseph into slavery instead of killing him (Genesis 37:26) 5. Goshen was a good place for shepherds. The Egyptians detested shepherds and would be happy to have them located far away (Genesis 46:34).

Application Questions:

1. The story of Joseph is a stark reminder that God doesn't always see things the way we do. Joseph's summary of the situation resonates with so many events. He told his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."⁶ When was a time you thought you were being mistreated, but God made it turn out for good?
2. Jacob continued to show favoritism about Rachel's two sons all the way to the end. Name a time when you have caused problems by showing favoritism to a child or to a coworker or employee.

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Genesis 45:4-8. Joseph gave God the credit for planning things far in advance to preserve the family of Jacob, the descendants of Abraham. Name a time when you thought things were just happening randomly but were actually happening according to God's direction.
1. Why did Joseph tell his grown brothers not to quarrel on the way back to their father? (Genesis 45:24)