

Joseph Saw His Brothers Come a Second Time

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the sorrow Jacob had experienced for many years because of the fact that he thought Joseph was dead. Joseph knew this test would reveal if there had been repentance in the hearts of his brothers. In this topic, we will see that Jacob did send Benjamin with his brothers in order to buy grain and protect them from starvation.

Joseph had told Pharaoh the famine would last for seven years. This famine was affecting the land of Canaan as much as it was affecting Egypt. Genesis 43:1-6 says, “Now the famine *was* severe in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, ‘Go back, buy us a little food.’ But Judah spoke to him, saying, ‘The man solemnly warned us, saying, “You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.” If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, “You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.”’ And Israel said, ‘Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?’” Jacob realized they would soon starve if they did not get additional grain from Egypt.

As a result, Jacob told his sons, “Go back, buy us a little food.” When they had returned from the previous trip to Egypt, Reuben had told his father that he could kill his two sons if they did not bring Benjamin back since the governor of Egypt had told them that the only way they could buy food would be to bring their youngest brother. Jacob had not been ready to really hear that the governor required them to bring Benjamin before they could buy any more food. As a result, we see that Judah now took the leadership and explained that the governor had warned them they would not be able to buy any more food until they brought Benjamin with them to Egypt. In fact, the governor said they would not even be able to see his face unless they brought Benjamin with them. Judah explained they did not have a choice. They had to take Benjamin with them or they would not be able to buy any more food.

In fact, Judah said they would not go back to Egypt to buy food unless Benjamin went with them. However, they were ready to go if Jacob agreed to send Benjamin with them. Then, Jacob did what we often do when we do not want to make a difficult choice. He blamed his sons by saying, “Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?” The word translated “wrongfully” is sometimes translated by words demonstrating evil and is frequently listed as the opposite of good. In Micah 3:2, we read, ““You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones...”” Jacob actually accused them of doing evil to their father for telling the governor they had a younger brother. Since the time Adam and

Eve sinned, people have wanted to blame someone else when they are not happy with a decision. That was what Jacob did here as he blamed the brothers for telling the governor they had a younger brother. Such blame does not solve problems, but it may create new problems.

Genesis 43:7-10 says, “But they said, ‘The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’” And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, “Bring your brother down”?” Then Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time.’” Since the brothers felt that they were being blamed, they all began to speak.

They said that the governor of Egypt carefully inquired about their family. In fact, he had asked them two specific questions, “Is your father still alive?” “Have you another brother?” Of course, Joseph asked these two questions because he really wanted to know what had happened to his father and brother during the more than twenty years since he had been sold as a slave by his other brothers. The sons of Jacob explained to their father that they had no idea the governor would then ask them to bring their brother down to the land of Egypt. However, that was a key part of the way Joseph was testing his brothers to see if the brothers had truly changed their attitudes.

Then, Judah spoke to his father. He asked his father to send Benjamin with him. Judah said it was necessary for them to live and not die. It would mean life for the brothers, for their father, and for their families including their children. Judah also said he would be surety for Benjamin. The word translated “surety” means to *become bail, a pledge or surety for someone or something*. Judah was saying he would take the place of his brother if the governor, or anyone else, tried to keep Benjamin in Egypt. Later, Judah used this same word when he spoke to Joseph, in Genesis 44:32, “For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.’” This word is also used several times in Proverbs to speak of guaranteeing a debt. Proverbs 22:26 warns, “Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts...” Earlier, Reuben had said Jacob could kill his sons if Benjamin did not return. Here, Judah said he would take the place of Benjamin so Benjamin could return home if anything happened. There is a great difference between these two choices.

Judah said if anything happened to Benjamin that he could not prevent, he would personally bear the blame forever. The word that is translated “blame” is usually translated *sin*. We will see that Judah did not have to bear the blame or sin of Benjamin. However, one of the descendants of Judah did bear our sin and perfected us for eternity. Hebrews 10:12-14 says, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins

forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” Christ took our sin and died in our place so we could receive eternal forgiveness and have all of our sins blotted out. By that one action, Christ became sin for us and placed His righteousness on all those who come to Him in repentance and faith. Christ did what Judah could never have done. Judah concluded his words by saying that if they had not waited, they would have already been back with food.

Genesis 43:11-17 says, “And their father Israel said to them, ‘If it *must* be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!’ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph. When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, ‘Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon.’ Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph’s house.” Here, we see that Jacob told his sons how to show kindness to the governor of Egypt.

Jacob also asked God Almighty to give his sons mercy as they stood before the governor so he would release both Benjamin and Simeon. Then, Jacob said, “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!” The word translated “bereaved” means *to be robbed of his son or sons*. This shows how great the fear was in the heart of Jacob that something evil would happen to Benjamin. However, Jacob realized that only God Almighty could show mercy and spare his sons, especially Benjamin. This showed that Jacob favored Benjamin just as he had favored Joseph. Judah, and probably all of the brothers, were willing to accept that favoritism and do whatever was necessary to protect Benjamin.

The brothers took the present from Jacob along with their brother and the double money and made their journey to Egypt. They were again brought before Joseph and he saw that Benjamin was with them. Joseph probably wanted to show kindness to Benjamin immediately, but he first had to finish the test of his brothers to make certain they had a different attitude toward Benjamin. As a result, Joseph told the steward of his house to take the brothers to his home and kill an animal so they could have a feast at his home for dinner. The steward was to kill the animal and prepare it so the feast would be ready when Joseph came home for dinner at noon. Since Joseph spoke to his steward in the Egyptian language, the brothers did not know what the steward had been told.

The steward did exactly as Joseph had ordered. He took the brothers with him and they went to the home of Joseph. Then, the steward had the animal killed and prepared so the feast would be ready when Joseph arrived home at noon. Meanwhile, that gave the

brothers a few hours to prepare for the return of the one they knew as the governor. They certainly did not realize that the governor was Joseph, their brother. We do not know what the brothers did as they waited for the governor to return to his home. This also gave them a few more hours to think. From what we see in the next topic, they had great fear in their hearts during the remaining hours of that morning. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why this test was necessary and how it revealed the hearts of the brothers. May the Lord bless you richly as you help your children learn to understand and explain both why this test was necessary and what it revealed to Joseph about the hearts of his brothers.