

GOD'S PLAN REVEALED

Bible Background – GENESIS 43, 45:1-15

Printed Text – GENESIS 45:1-15

45 ¹Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was.

²Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

³“I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them.

⁴“Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt.

⁵But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.

⁶This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

⁷God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.

⁸So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser to

Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

⁹“Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!’

¹⁰You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own.

¹¹I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.”

¹²Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph!

¹³Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.”

¹⁴Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same.

¹⁵Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Throughout the past few lessons, we have followed the saga of Joseph and his brothers. We saw how favoritism shown toward him by their father, Jacob, fueled resentment and jealousy in his brothers. At seventeen, he told of two dreams to his father and brothers that revealed his future, with Joseph being set above them all in authority and prestige. This revelation drove the brothers to murderous hatred resulting in them selling Joseph into slavery in Egypt. But Joseph always maintained honor and obedience to God, and after thirteen years of enslavement and imprisonment, Joseph rose to the highest governorship in the land, second only to Pharaoh himself. While we study this last installment of Joseph's story, let us focus on how Joseph viewed his hardship and how God uses difficult circumstances to accomplish His divine plan.

Background: Joseph was a man who honored God in every situation whether it was suffering or success; he honored the one true and living God. Potiphar's wife tried to tempt him, but because Joseph wanted to honor his Master, he would not yield (Genesis 39:9). Although God had given him the ability to interpret dreams, Joseph always gave God the credit for being able to do so (Genesis 40:8). Even when he was before Pharaoh, he honored God. When asked to interpret Pharaoh's dream, Joseph boldly told Pharaoh there would be a specific number of years of plenty and famine would surely follow (Genesis 41:14-36). When Joseph named his son, Manasseh (which means "to forget"), he was stating that God helped him to forget his sorrow. In today's lesson, Joseph tells his brothers who he is and acknowledges that God is responsible for him being in Egypt. Later after Israel dies, Joseph will reassure his brothers that God had ordered his steps, and God did it for the good of all (Genesis 50:15-21).

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 49

Joseph Makes Himself Known

Genesis 45:1-8: True to God's word, as He revealed by Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream, Egypt did experience seven prosperous years of plenty. Now the seven years of famine have begun and Pharaoh directed all to do as Joseph would instruct them to do (Gen. 45:53-57). The famine also existed outside of Egypt in the surrounding land and those suffering among these populations came to Egypt to buy food. In the midst of these were the brothers of Joseph who traveled from the land of Canaan. He recognized them but they did not recognize him, seeing him as an Egyptian official. He questioned them, imprisoned them and held one (Simeon) as ransom for the return of the youngest brother, Benjamin.

On their second trip, they returned with Benjamin. Joseph treated the brothers to a feast but continued to interrogate them. He accused Benjamin of stealing a cup (which he had planted in Benjamin's things) and threatened to keep Benjamin as a prisoner. At this point, Judah explains how devastating this would be to their aged father and offers to sacrifice himself and stay in Benjamin's place (Gens 43:1-44:34). On hearing Judah's willingness to sacrifice himself, Joseph was overcome with emotion and could no longer keep up the ruse. He sent everyone except his brothers out of the room and revealed himself to them. He cried so loudly that everyone in the building heard.

Joseph asked of his father's condition and his brothers couldn't answer him for they were troubled (Heb. *bahal*, meaning disturbed, alarmed, terrified). Possibly they were shocked at Joseph's intense emotion or at even being in his presence, since they assumed he had died long ago. Or possibly they were troubled that the brother that they had treated so cruelly years ago was now a high-positioned ruler of the world's superpower. Joseph did not hold a grudge and showed genuine affection towards them, encouraging them to not be angry with themselves. For all that had happened was according to God's plan to save the family during this time of famine.

◆ *What can we do to remember, like Joseph, that God is in control even when situations seem evil or chaotic?*

A Family Reunited

Genesis 45:9-15: With five more years left of the famine, Joseph urges his brothers to return to Canaan and tell their father, Israel, of his situation in Egypt. He tells them to not delay in conveying this news because he wants and is able to take care of the entire family for the duration of these devastating times. He is prepared to protect them in the land of Goshen, a region in northern Egypt east of the lower Nile. It was a fertile area with access to trade. In addition, the family would be close to Joseph with all of the protection and privilege that his high position would allow.

The entire clan would be cared for if they accepted Joseph's invitation to relocate to the land of Goshen in Egypt with all of their possessions, flocks and herds. They would have plenty of food with no need to journey back and forth. The households of his father and brothers would escape the ravages of poverty and lack. He, Joseph, has made this promise to them, that despite the mistreatment at his brothers' hands, they were forgiven, reunited and Joseph genuinely cared for them.

◆ *Joseph's reunion with his family was emotional and tearful. How does your family deal with strong emotions?*

Conclusion

Joseph's brothers were uncertain of the outcome of this reunion with him and were very fearful. They responded out of their sense of guilt over how they had treated Joseph in the past. But Joseph was, at last, caring and forgiving, assuring them that moving forward, he would provide for and protect them. For, Joseph recognized all that had happened as God's plan to preserve the family of Israel. Our ability to respond to our circumstances victoriously or as victims relies on whether we can recognize God's hand in all situations. Although we sometimes feel that evil will overtake us, we must always be assured that God's plan is being fulfilled for His perfect purpose. Thank God for the challenging times you have faced and allow Him to use you for His glory.

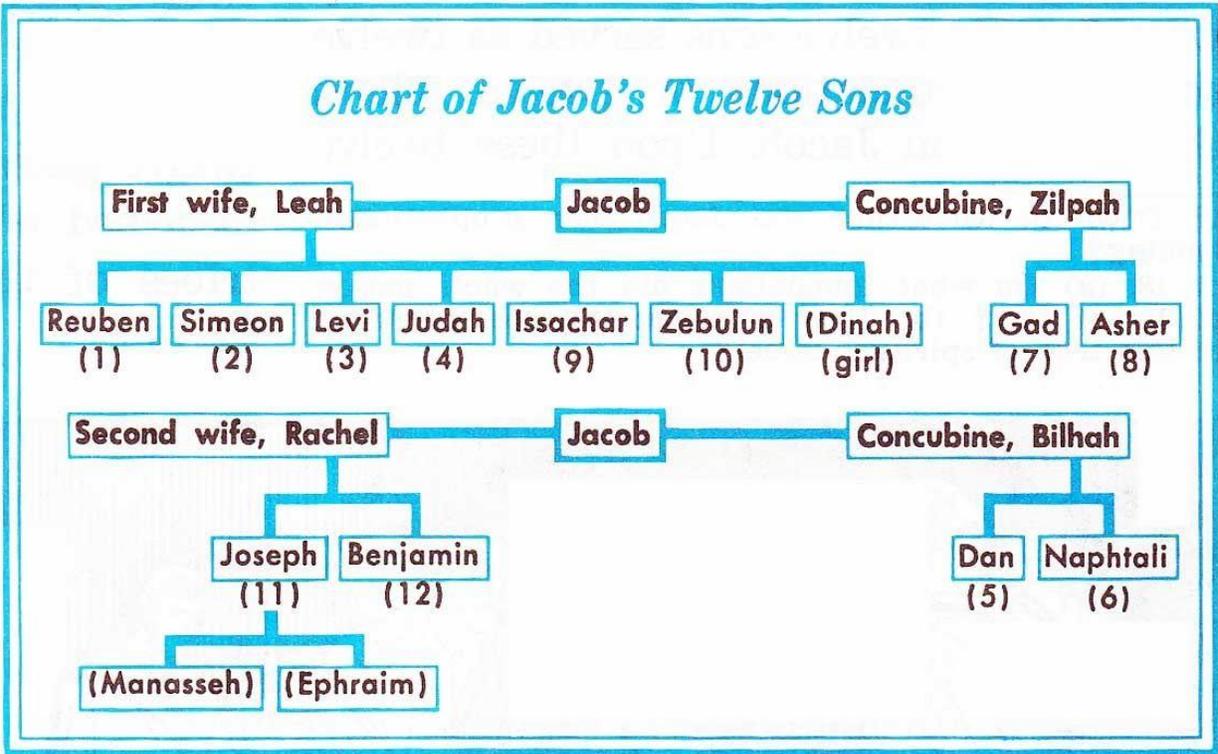


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Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Fall Quarter), 45-55. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.
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Lesson for Next Week – October 4, 2020 – Study Guide 5

LOVE AND DEVOTION TO OTHERS

Bible Background ♦ 1 SAMUEL 19:1-7, 23:1-18; 2 SAMUEL 9

Printed Text ♦ 1 SAMUEL 19:1-7

Devotional Reading ♦ MATTHEW 5:43-48