



Lesson 26

The Brothers visit Egypt a Second Time

In the last lesson we learned about the way God worked in the life of Joseph, teaching him humility and in the lives of his brothers, teaching them to rely on God. The brothers returned to Canaan with corn from Egypt but had to leave Simeon behind as a hostage; he would only be released if they returned with Benjamin as proof that the story they told the Governor (Joseph) was true – that indeed they were not spies.

The Famine gets worse (43:1-14)

Jacob refused to let his sons take Benjamin down into Egypt to bring about the release of Simeon.

However, all the corn the brothers had brought back from Egypt eventually was eaten up and so Jacob told his sons to return there for more supplies. Judah pointed out to his father that they would only get food from the Governor (who was Joseph in disguise) if they took Benjamin with them as Joseph had demanded of them. Joseph had told them that if they did not do this then they would be seen to be spies. Jacob did everything he could to resist sending Benjamin but eventually he entrusted him to Judah who pledged himself for Benjamin's life if necessary. Throughout the life of his family, Jacob had shown favoritism to Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of Rachel; he had tried to protect them from danger even though this meant putting his other sons at risk. This had caused great family problems and now God shows him the folly of this. He has lost Joseph and now Benjamin is at risk. Finally Jacob recognizes that he cannot protect his children from danger at all times, what he must do is to pray to God and trust Him to look after them.

“May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”
Genesis 43:14

The Brothers return to Egypt (43:15-34)

The brothers set off with a double amount of money to pay for corn and also the money that had been hidden in their sacks last time. They took a gift of fruits and nuts for the Governor; they were willing to do anything necessary to help release Simeon. Notice that they do not seek God's guidance in prayer; they are still trying to work out matters themselves and think that they can buy their way out of trouble. The Bible tells us of people like this.

“Why should I fear in times of trouble, when the iniquity of those who cheat me surrounds me, those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?
Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice.”
Psalm 49:5-8

There was no way that their money would enable them to get Simeon released from prison!

This tells us a lot about them. We know that previously Joseph had brought a bad report of them to his father. It seems likely that the brothers had been dishonest in some way, perhaps cheating their father and Joseph reported them. We can hardly blame them, they had been brought up by a father, Jacob, who cheated his own twin brother, Esau and later his brother-in-law, Laban – he did not set a good example for his sons. So Joseph had hidden their money in their sacks and accused them of stealing. He wants to find out if they are now honest and will declare this when they return to Egypt.

When their attempts to return the money were refused, they suspected a plot to enslave them. Did they think of the young Joseph whom they had robbed and sold into slavery? This had clearly been on their consciences for many years.

“Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.”





And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."
Genesis 42:21-22

What a lesson for them and for us! The Bible teaches that our sins are forgiven when we confess them and try not to do them again. But the brothers had concealed what they had done from their father and Jacob had suffered for many years thinking that Joseph was dead. Now his sons are forced to examine their consciences. We can imagine how Joseph's heart ached as he looked at his younger brother Benjamin and asked after his father. Joseph prepared a meal for his brothers. They were seated in order of age, which caused them amazement, how did the Governor know how old each of them was?

A Final Test (44:1-17)

"Then he (Joseph) commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack, and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him."
Genesis 44:1-2

They left for Canaan with the corn they had bought. Joseph sent his servants after them to confront them and charge them with theft of the silver cup and money. When they caught up with the brothers and accused them they were indignant and said:

"Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing!
Behold, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?
Whichever of your servants is found with it shall die, and we also will be my lord's servants."
Genesis 44:7-9

Imagine their horror when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. They believed that, years ago, they had been responsible for the death of Joseph, now they faced having to return to their father Jacob to tell him that Benjamin also was dead, executed for theft in Egypt. But this was Joseph's final test of them; would they be willing to abandon Benjamin just as they had got rid of Joseph many years earlier?

Judah's Intercession (44:18-34)

The brothers returned to the Governor under guard and Judah made a lovely, impassioned plea to him. He asked that Benjamin be let free and said that he would take his place.

"Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.
For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."
Genesis 44:33-34

They had passed every test that Joseph set them. They were no longer the dishonest men who had cheated their father, hated Joseph, sold him into slavery and hardened their hearts to their father's anguish. They had been humbled by God's testing of them, using Joseph who He had sent before them into Egypt (Psalm 105:17).

If we are disciples of the Lord Jesus we need to accept that God may work in our lives to test us like this. He looks at our characters and leads us into situations that test us to see how faithful we will be, disciplining us as His children.

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- Everyone in the family was tested by God until they all realised that the only thing they could do was to trust Him whatever happened to them in their lives.
- God may test us in our lives to make us trust in Him also.

