Joseph's Family Comes to Egypt

Genesis 42:1 - 46:7

Bible Memory Verse

Genesis 46:3 NIV

"I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there."

Bible Story

Joseph is second-in-charge of Egypt—Vice-Pharaoh. The land had just recently undergone seven years of great abundance and was now just a little into the seven years of severe famine. The Lord had warned the Pharaoh of Egypt of the abundance and famine in a series of dreams which Joseph had interpreted. Therefore, the government of Egypt was prepared for the famine because it had stockpiled, under the leadership and direction of Joseph, enough food in anticipation of seven bad years.

Meanwhile, back on the old home-front of Joseph back in the land of Canaan, Jacob, or Israel, heard that there was grain in Egypt, sent his sons to get some. So the ten brothers, minus the youngest, Benjamin, embarked on the long, arduous journey to Egypt.

> *"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 pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them" (Genesis 42:6-7).*

His brothers, however, did not recognize Joseph. The dreams that Joseph had as a boy were coming true!

Now, I imagine, Joseph was faced with a quandary: What should he do? Should he repay evil for evil? Should he make them suffer as he did? Or should he administer grace and

mercy. After all he had the power to do whatever he wanted. Joseph decided to test his brothers, to see if they had changed since they sold their cocky, younger brother to traveling merchants. One of them was put in prison and the other nine were told to bring their youngest brother back to see Joseph. When the brothers relayed the message to Jacob, he refused to send another son to die.

But eventually, Jacob and company had to go back to Egypt to buy more grain because the famine was so severe. Jacob asked his sons to go back and they reminded him of the man's (Joseph) command to bring back the youngest son. Judah, one of the brothers, vowed to lay down his life for Benjamin's sake if need be to reassure Jacob of the youngest brother's safety.

Upon arrival to Egypt, they presented themselves to Joseph who in turn invited them to dinner. Through another series of tests, Joseph saw his brothers devotion and protection for their younger brother, Benjamin, and he could see that they had indeed changed. He sent everyone out of the room except for his brothers and he revealed himself to them:

> *"I am Joseph! ...come close to me. 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... 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" (Genesis 45:3-8).*

Joseph's brothers were floored! They couldn't believe it! News reached Pharaoh and he was excited! News traveled to Joseph's father, Jacob, Israel. And he was ecstatic!! His dead son is now alive!

God spoke to Jacob, Israel, in a dream and told him to not be afraid, but to go down with his family, and be with Joseph in Egypt. Pharaoh prepared and gave a special place in Egypt, in Goshen, to Joseph's father and family. Thus the people of God, Israel, went, by God's command, down to live in Egypt for a time.

At the close of the book of Genesis, the people of Israel are in Egypt, enjoying the favor of the Pharaoh. There are about seventy people total—Israelites—when the chapters of Genesis come to an end.

How will the people return to the land?

Now, that is another tale altogether...

Life Application

Forgiveness. Joseph exercised extreme forgiveness to his brothers. He could have treated them very harshly. But he didn't. He granted them grace and mercy, because he knew that God had arranged the master plan.

We are a part of a much bigger story than just our own lives. Our individual stories fit into a much larger story that God is telling. It's an amazing story, and we each have our part in it. What part do you think you were created to play?

Review Questions

1. What was Joseph's position/job in Egypt? He was second-in-charge of Egypt (vice Pharaoh), tasked to oversee the collection and distribution of food during abundance and famine.
2. Who came, of special importance to Joseph, to Egypt to get some food? Joseph's brothers!
3. Did Joseph's brothers recognize Joseph? No.
4. Joseph decided to test his brothers. What did he do to one of his brothers? Put him in jail (probably to see if the other brothers would treat this imprisoned brother the same way they treated him).
5. When Joseph's brothers had to come back a second time to get food, who did Joseph tell them that he had to bring? Benjamin.
6. After Joseph put his brothers through some more tests, did they pass? Did they protect their younger brother, Benjamin? Yes!
7. Were Joseph's brothers and family surprised that he was still alive? Yes!
8. What did the Pharaoh of Egypt do for Joseph's family? Invited them to come live in Egypt because of the famine and because of their relationship with Joseph.
9. How many people were in Jacob's family (Israel's family) that went down to live in Egypt at the end of the book of Genesis? Around 70.

Coloring Sheet

Next page



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