



## The Essentials Series

### Week 8 – The Adventures of Joseph, Pt. 2 Gen 42-50

St. George's Episcopal Church

Spring 2015

---

#### Joseph: Ruler of Egypt

- Chapter 40 closes with Joseph left in jail, for a crime he did not commit. Although the royal cupbearer was indebted to him, upon his reinstatement the cupbearer “did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.”
  - God again initiates and chapter 41 opens as the narrative shifts to Pharaoh himself who is given a series of dreams. No one can interpret them, and then the cupbearer remembers Joseph.
  - Joseph is called to Pharaoh and is able to tell him what the dreams mean, while faithfully giving God the credit for the interpretation. The dreams indicate that seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of severe famine.
  - Joseph then suggests a course of action to Pharaoh, wherein 1/5 of the produce from the seven plentiful years be stored in ‘government warehouses’ and used as a reserve for the famine years. Pharaoh appoints Joseph to supervise this project and makes him ruler of Egypt.
- Joseph ably discharges his new duty, and soon marries an Egyptian woman, and has two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. These boys are later ‘adopted’ by Jacob/Israel in his final blessing and become the two half-tribes of the nation of Israel (Gen 48:5-7;13ff)
- The famine years are so widespread and severe that people from all over are forced to come to Egypt to purchase grain to survive. The family of Israel, back in Canaan, is no exception.
  - Jacob sends ten of his sons to buy grain; he keeps Benjamin the youngest with him. They come before Joseph who recognizes them, although they do not recognize him. When they bow down to him, Joseph remembers his own dreams.
  - What do you think Joseph is thinking/feeling at this point?
  - Joseph puts them to the test: He accuses them of being spies, and to prove their story is true, he has them return home and bring Benjamin back, but keeps Simeon in Egypt under pain of death until they return with Benjamin. Joseph is testing the brothers to see if they will sell out one of their own to save their own hides. The brothers believe this to be recompense for their treachery to Joseph all those years ago, whom they suppose is dead. Joseph also tests their honesty by having the money they paid for the grain secretly slipped into their baggage, to see if they will return it.
  - Upon their return to Canaan, the brothers have to convince Jacob to let Benjamin go – for Benjamin is Jacob’s youngest son, and the last remaining so from Rachel.
- In a mark of the change in his character, Judah speaks up, indicating that there is no way for them to get more grain unless they bring Benjamin, and he makes a personal pledge to his father that he will vouch for Benjamin’s safety. He swears to be held personally accountable for Benjamin’s life.

#### Joseph & His Brothers

- The return of the brothers demonstrates their honest, indicating in part they are reformed. One test remains: what will they do when one of them is given undue favor, in this case Benjamin?
  - At a feast to welcome the brothers Joseph gives Benjamin a portion five times that of the others. After the feast Joseph orders food sacks to be filled for each of the brothers, but has a silver cup placed secretly in Benjamin’s sack.
  - Joseph’s guard’s then find the ‘stolen’ cup in his sack and Joseph accuses Benjamin of theft. What will the brother’s do now? Will they sacrifice Benjamin, who had been shown favoritism (through no fault of his own), so save themselves?
- In the climax of the story it is once again Judah who steps forward, demonstrating again the blessing of leadership of the family is being given to him. In fact in 44:14 the group is identified as “Judah and his brothers”. Judah speaks again, this time to Joseph, and he states two things:
  - To take the life of Benjamin would undo their father – thus demonstrating Judah’s concern and respect for Jacob, which years ago they did not have on account of Joseph.

- Judah then discloses the oath he swore to protect Benjamin, and in view of the ‘theft’, offers his own life in Benjamin’s place. Judah has finally, by God’s grace, learned the lessons of a true leader, that of self-sacrifice in the place of one who is guilty.
- God’s election of Judah is demonstrated in Judah’s transformation. Through his son Perez is descended the Messiah (see Matthew 1:1-17).
  - This is the true model of kingship, typified in Judah’s act of faithfulness. It is sullied by David, who, at the end of his reign disobeys the Lord and when given the choice of suffering himself or having the people suffer, he opts selfishly for the latter (2 Samuel 24).
  - The substitutionary offering by the king is then fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ, who is descended of the tribe of Judah, and offers his life in the sinner’s place. Jesus is not just the true king, but also the true high priest, not of the Levitical line through Aaron but through the ‘order of Melchizedek’ (see Hebrews 7 – 10; cf. Psalm 110:4), who was both king and priest. Jesus is also the promised Prophet (Dt 18:15-18), thus he fulfills the three-fold office of the Messiah of Prophet, Priest, and King.
  - Joseph now sees the faithfulness in Judah, and reveals himself to his brothers. He requests they return and relocate the entire family of Israel to Goshen in Egypt.
  - 46:8ff gives a short genealogy of the family, whose total, including Joseph’s family, is seventy individuals. This parallels in microcosm the seventy nations listed in the Table of Nations in Gen 10.
- Before Israel dies he does three things:
  - He makes Joseph swear to bury him in the field where Abraham and Isaac were buried
  - He blesses and adopts Joseph’s two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, invoking the covenant promises given to Abraham and Isaac, and also invoking the creation mandate
  - He then summons and blesses his twelve sons (49:1-27) and makes them all swear to bury him in the field of Machpelah, which they do.
- Joseph’s brothers, upon their father’s death, now fear Joseph and think that he may seek retribution upon them now that Jacob is dead.
  - Joseph, with great faithfulness to God and the grace that comes from it, assures his brothers with one of the great passages in all the Bible: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive” (50:20).
  - This word from Joseph at long last brings to a close the tension of the whole story, from dysfunction to forgiveness and reunion.

### **Closing Remarks on Genesis**

- Genesis closes with the death of Joseph, who prophesies that God will bring them back to Canaan, and he charges them to preserve his bones in Egypt and when the time comes to bring them back and bury them in Canaan (see Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).
  - While the toledot of Jacob closes with a fair degree of resolution for the family, the Genesis as a whole closes with a lot left unresolved.
  - Although God has preserved the lineage of the Seed of Promise from Eve, through Seth, to Noah then Shem, to Abraham then Isaac, to Jacob through Judah, the work of the serpent has not been undone.
  - The promise of God to Abraham for offspring, land, and blessing to the world are very much unfulfilled. Yes, the patriarchal family has grown to 70, which is a great blessing but still a far cry from numbering with the stars of the heavens! And that family is not in the Promised Land but in Egypt, the land of the descendants of cursed Ham.
- Instead we note a few items of partial fulfillment: Jacob blesses Pharaoh, and the patriarch’s presence in Egypt is a blessing to the Egyptians. Jacob receives and blesses Joseph’s sons who, although are half-Egyptian, are made inheritors of the promise. 400 years later they will inherit a portion of land in Canaan when the nation of Israel returns to conquer Canaan.
  - Jacob also hints at the future of Israel under Judah, indicating in his prophetic blessing that “the scepter shall never depart from Judah (49:10).
  - This blessing is later confirmed by God when He makes an unconditional covenant with Judah’s descendent David, and swears that the throne shall never depart from David’s son (1 Sam 7:16).
  - Thus when Jesus is called the Son of David (esp. in Matthew) we must have in view a fulfilled promise stretching all the way back to Genesis.