

Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

Jacob Sends for Grain

- Jacob received news about the availability of grain in Egypt and sent his sons to purchase some [Gen 42:1-4].
 - The famine had become so severe that obtaining food was a matter of life and death [v. 2].
 - Jacob did not want to risk losing Rachel's other son (Benjamin) and did not trust his sons to protect him [v. 4].
- The ten sons travelled among others who were headed to Egypt [Gen 42:5].
- When they arrived in Egypt they had to go before Joseph to purchase grain [Gen 42:6].
 - They had no idea they were approaching Joseph [v. 8] and bowed to him in respect.
 - Joseph understood this to be the fulfillment of his dreams about his family [v. 9].
- Joseph recognized his brothers, but he treated them harshly as though he did not know them [Gen 42:7-8].
- Joseph remembered the dreams he had about his family [Gen 37:6-9; 42:9a] and very likely reckoned that his whole family would eventually be coming to Egypt.
- Joseph accused his brothers of being spies to find out more about them [Gen 42:9b].
 - Given that they had traveled among a stream of refugees coming from Canaan desperate for food, the charge of spying was a bit of a stretch.
 - It may appear that Joseph was exacting some revenge on his brothers, but it is more likely that he was testing their character.
- The brothers politely asserted their true reason for being in Egypt [Gen 42:10-11].
- When Joseph once again accused them of being spies, the brothers revealed more information to Joseph [Gen 42:12-13].
 - Joseph now knew Benjamin was alive.
 - He also knew his family believed he was dead.
- Joseph then used his position of authority to try to get his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt [Gen 42:14-17].
 - His initial plan had only one of the brothers going back to Egypt to get Benjamin.
 - He threw them in prison for three days to let them decide who would go back.
- After thinking about it some more, Joseph came up with a new plan [Gen 42:18-20].
 - One of his brothers would be kept in lock up in Egypt as a "hostage" to ensure that the others would return with Benjamin.

- The rest of the brothers would take grain to feed the whole family and then bring Benjamin back to Egypt.
- With nine of his brothers making the trek to Canaan and back, Joseph knew that would provide greater protection for Benjamin's life.
- Joseph put his brothers in a similar situation they had been in before – they could go back, lie to Jacob and leave Simeon in prison.
- Joseph held the power over them because he knew they would need to come back for more food (there would be seven years of famine) and he could refuse to give it to them if they did not do what he had asked of them.
- At this point the brothers reasoned that they were suffering for what they had done to Joseph [Gen 42:21-22].
 - We now learn that Joseph had pleaded with his brothers for mercy to no avail.
 - Reuben reminded his brothers that he had begged them not to harm Joseph [Gen 37:21-22].
- Joseph wept when he heard what his brothers were saying [Gen 42:23-24].
 - Joseph had been speaking with his brothers through an interpreter as part of his ruse to disguise his true identity, so they did not know he could understand them when they spoke Hebrew.
 - Joseph gathered himself and chose Simeon as the brother who would be locked up in prison.
- Joseph sent his brothers (minus Simeon) home with grain, provisions for the trip and their money [Gen 42:24-28].
 - When one of the brothers discovered the silver in his sack, they all became fearful knowing that their honesty could now be called into question.
 - As before, they assumed that God had brought this calamity upon them.
- When the brothers arrived home they explained the situation to their father Jacob [Gen 42:29-34].
 - They spared Jacob by not mentioning the part about being thrown in prison for three days.
 - They added one detail about being able to trade in the land [v. 34] which was not specifically mentioned in the original account.
- While emptying their sacks, the brothers discovered that they all had the money they had taken to buy grain [Gen 42:35].
- Jacob was overcome with grief and refused to send Benjamin to Egypt [Gen 42:36].
 - Jacob assumed Simeon was actually dead.
 - Losing two sons was more than he could bear.
- Reuben made a desperate plea to convince Jacob to let them take Benjamin [Gen 42:37].
- Jacob once again refused to send Benjamin to Egypt [Gen 42:38].
 - Jacob did not trust his sons to protect Benjamin.
 - Furthermore, he could not bear the thought of losing Rachel's only living son (or so he thought).