

12 • The Beginning of Israel's Time in Egypt

Our last lesson ended with:

Moreover, all the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain, because the famine was severe over all the earth. (Gen 41:57)

And who else was being affected? Jacob and

Joseph's brothers in the land of Canaan. In Genesis

42, Jacob sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain. As they bow with their faces to the ground (42:6), they are immediately recognized by Joseph, the governor of the land, but they don't recognize him. As they are tested by Joseph, it's interesting to hear how they talk amongst themselves (not knowing that Joseph could understand them):

"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." (42:21-22)

Joseph binds Simeon and sends the other nine brothers back to Canaan with orders to bring their youngest brother back with them in order to "prove" to Joseph that they are not spies. While Jacob refuses at first, he eventually gives in and all of Joseph's brothers come together in Joseph's house. As Joseph further tests his brothers to the point where it appears that he is going to take Benjamin's life, Judah makes a heartfelt plea:

"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." (44:33-34)

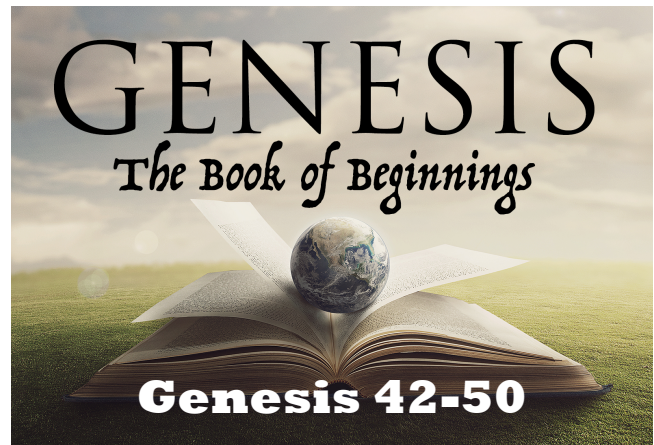
At this point, Joseph "could not control himself" any longer (45:1). As he makes himself known to his brothers, they are "dismayed at his presence." But listen carefully to what Joseph says:

"And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors." (45:5-7)

Joseph provides richly for his father, his brothers, and their families in the land of Goshen in Egypt. "All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy" (46:27).

For seventeen years, Jacob lives in the land of Egypt. At 147 years of age, he makes Joseph swear not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry him back to the land of Canaan. Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, elevating them to the status of full sons, "as Reuben and Simeon are" (48:5). In Genesis 49, Jacob calls his sons together, "that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come," blessing each "with the blessing suitable to him" (49:28). When Jacob finished commanding his sons, he breathed his last "and was gathered to his people" (49:33).

Again, Joseph's brothers fear that he might finally retaliate against them, but listen carefully to Joseph's response: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20). So Joseph and his family remained in Egypt. Before he died, he said to his brothers, "God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (50:25).



For Class & Family Discussion:

- What did the ten brothers believe about what was happening in [Genesis 42:21](#)? And what about their terrified words in [42:28](#)?
- When Jacob references “[Sheol](#)” in [42:38](#), what is he talking about? What can we learn from such an ancient reference?
- In [43:14](#), Jacob refers to God as *El Shaddai*, “[God Almighty](#).” What has Jacob come to believe about the God of Abraham and Isaac?
- What should we make of the way Joseph treats his brothers in [Genesis 43](#)?
- What situation does Joseph engineer in [Genesis 44](#)? Why?
- Is there anything that stands out to you about Judah’s plea to Joseph in [Genesis 44:18-34](#)?
- It’s hard to imagine being one of Joseph’s brothers in [45:3](#). If you were, in that moment, what would you be thinking?
- [Genesis 45:5-8](#) is vitally important to our understanding of Joseph’s perspective about his life in Egypt and why he does what he does. What can we learn from his statement?
- [Genesis 46:1-4](#) describes a truly incredible scene. What is happening, in your own words? Or what stands out to you about Jacob’s words in [48:15-16](#)?
- What is Jacob doing in [Genesis 49](#)? What stands out to you about his words to his sons? In what way are his words to Judah in [49:8-12](#) of particular importance?
- What do you make of Joseph’s last recorded words in [50:25](#)?