

Genesis Chapter 45

Verses 1-8: Stunned by the revelation of who it really was with whom they dealt, the brothers then heard expressed a masterpiece of recognition of and submission to the sovereignty of God, i.e., His providential rule over the affairs of life, both good and bad (see note on 41:43-45).

Genesis 45:1 "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren."

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself": That he should not weep, as the Targum of Jonathan adds. At least he could not much longer refrain from tears, such an effect Judah's speech had on his passions.

"Before all them that stood before him": His servants that attended him and waited upon him, the steward of his house, and others, upon whose account he put such pressure upon himself. So as to keep his passions from giving vent; so that they might not discover the inward feelings of his mind. But not being able to conceal them any longer.

"And he cried": Or called out with a loud voice, and an air of authority.

"Cause every man to go out from me": Out of the room in which he and his brethren were. Perhaps this order was given to the steward of the house to depart himself, and to remove every inferior officer and servant upon the spot. Or other people that might come in to hear the trial of those men, and to see how they would be dealt with.

"And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren": Not that Joseph was ashamed of them, and of owning before them the relation he was with them.

But that they might not see the confusion his brethren would be thrown into, and have knowledge of the sin they had been guilty of in selling him which could not fail of being mentioned by him, and confessed by them. Besides, it was not suitable to his grandeur and dignity to be seen in such an extreme passion he was now going into.

Joseph could stand this no more. He broke down and began to cry in front of everyone. The Egyptians, who were with Joseph, were asked to leave the room. Joseph told his brothers who he was.

Genesis 45:2 "And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard."

"And he wept aloud": Or "gave forth his voice in weeping"; as he wept he cried aloud. For having put such a violent restraint on himself, as the flood of tears was the greater, so his voice was the stronger and louder for it.

"And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard": The Egyptians, that were in the room or rooms adjoining to that where Joseph was, heard his cry, and perhaps a great deal of what was said. Which they soon reported to others, and it quickly reached Pharaoh's court, which might not be at any great distance.

He was not just sobbing; this was a wrenching cry to wash away the hurt of twenty years. The Pharaoh's house and the Egyptians were not in the room with Joseph, but this loud crying could be heard throughout the dwelling. It, possibly, could be heard in adjoining buildings.

Genesis 45:3 "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I [am] Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence."

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph": As soon as he could compose himself a little, and utter his words, the first thing he said was that he was Joseph. That was his right name, his Hebrew name. Though he was called by the Egyptians Zaphnath-paaneah, and by which name Joseph's brethren only knew him, if they knew his name at all.

And it must be very startling to them to bear this sound, and to be told by himself that was his name. And which was not all he meant and they understood, but that he was Joseph their brother as afterwards expressed.

"Doth my father yet live?" This he knew before, for they had told him he was alive. Therefore he puts this question not through ignorance, or as doubting but to express his affliction for his father, and his joy that he was alive.

"And his brethren could not answer him": They were so surprised and astonished; they were like men thunderstruck. They were not able to utter a word for a while. In spite of many assurances, this uneasiness persisted for many years (50:15).

"For they were troubled at his presence": The sin of selling him came fresh into their minds, the guilt of it pressed their consciences, and the circumstances that Joseph was in, filled them with fear that he would avenge himself on them.

They were literally "terrified, trembling."

When Joseph revealed who he was, panic rose up in them, and they were speechless.

They had thought before that they might lose their lives, but now they knew that they deserved to die. What would they do? We need to look at the next few lines and see a type of Jesus. We deserved to die the cruel death of the cross but Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, took our place to give us eternal life. Joseph the beloved son of Jacob made a way for his family to live.

Genesis 45:4 "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I [am] Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt."

"And Joseph said unto his brethren, come near to me, I pray you": Very probably Joseph sat in a chair of state while they were under examination, and through reverence of him they kept at a proper distance.

Or being frightened at what he had said, he might observe them drawing back, as Jarchi remarks, and so encourages them in a kind and tender manner to return and come nearer to him, and the rather, that they might more privately converse together without being overheard.

As also that they might, by approaching him discern and call to mind some of his features still remaining, by which they might be assured he was Joseph indeed.

"And they came near, and he said, I am Joseph your brother": Not only his name was Joseph, but he was that Joseph that was their brother. He claims and owns the relation between them, which must be very affecting to them, who had used him so unkindly.

"Whom ye sold into Egypt": Which is added, not so much to put them in mind of and rebuke them with their sin, but to assure them that he was really their brother Joseph. Which he could not have related had he not been he, as well as to lead on to what he had further to say to them for their comfort.

Genesis 45:5 "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

"Now therefore be not grieved": To an excess, so as to be swallowed up with too much sorrow; otherwise it was necessary for them to be grieved for their sin, and to show a godly sorrow and true repentance for it.

"Nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither": Reflect upon themselves, and afflict their selves in an immoderate way. Or break forth into anger and wrath with one another, lecturing and blaming each other for their conduct in that affair. And then provoke contentions and quarrels among themselves.

"For God did send me before you to preserve life": The life of thousands of persons in Egypt, Canaan, and other countries. And particularly to preserve their lives was he sent before them into Egypt. Where, by interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, by which he understood and did foretell the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine; he was to be given great honor and trust.

And had laid up a sufficiency of corn in the time of plenty to answer the needs of various countries in the time of famine; including his own family. Therefore, would have this attributed by them to the wise disposing protecting care of God.

There are symbolisms in this. We are Jesus' brethren. Jesus has forgiven us. We do not deserve it, but it is part of God's plan to save us. Joseph forgave his brethren. They did not deserve it. He tried to explain that they were doing what God wanted them to do in order to save them.

Genesis 45:6 "For these two years [hath] the famine [been] in the land: and yet [there are] five years, in the which [there shall] neither [be] earing nor harvest."

"For these two years hath the famine been, in the land": In the land of Egypt and in the countries round about. Joseph would have been 39 years old and away from his brothers for 22 years (37:2).

"And yet there are five years": Still remaining, which he knew by the above dreams and the interpretation of them.

"In the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest": That is, no tillage of land, neither ploughing nor sowing, and so no reaping, or gathering in of the fruits of the earth, as used to be in harvest. At least, there would be very little ground tilled; only it may be on the banks of the Nile, since they had no corn to spare for seed.

Besides, as the Egyptians knew by Joseph's prediction that the Nile would not overflow, it was to no purpose to attempt to plough their land, which through seven years of drought was become very difficult, or to sow, could they get the seed into the ground, since there was no likelihood of its springing up again.

Genesis 45:7 "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

"To save ... posterity in the earth": Words reflecting, on Joseph's part, an understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant and its promise of a nation (chapters 12, 15, 17).

Joseph gave a clear testimony to God's working His divine intervention in his own life when he said "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity ... and to save your lives ... so now it was not you that sent me here, but God" (verses 7 and 8).

Sometimes, when God sends us out to do a job for Him, we are not aware, at first, what the mission is for. Often it seems so futile, as it did when Joseph was in jail. If we are God's, nothing happens to us accidentally, it is part of God's plan. Joseph was telling them of five more years of famine.

He was trying to make them understand that he was sent ahead to prepare a place, where his family can be saved. Joseph was not holding a grudge. He realized that his time here was part of a great plan that God had, to get the children of Israel into Egypt. God told Abraham they would spend 400 years in Egypt. This was fulfillment of that prophecy.

Genesis 45:8 "So now [it was] not you [that] sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

"Father to Pharaoh": A title which belonged to viziers and which designated one who, unrelated to Pharaoh, nevertheless performed a valuable function and held high position, which in Joseph's

case was “lord of all Egypt” (verse 9). A new and younger Pharaoh now reigned (Senusert III, 1878 – 1841 B.C.).

The phrase “he hath made me a father to Pharaoh” is an expression applied to Egyptian viziers as far back as the third millennium B.C.

God had worked out the selling of Joseph to Potiphar. Potiphar's wife had been used, as well, to get Joseph in jail. There he met the butler who told the Pharaoh about Joseph's interpretation of dreams. God can use ungodly people to accomplish His goals. Joseph had to be ruler in Egypt, so that he would be allowed to bring his family to safety. Thus, began Israel's stay in Egypt.

Genesis 45:9 "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:"

"Haste you, and go up to my father": In Canaan, which lay higher than Egypt; being desirous he should know as soon as possible that he was alive, and in what circumstances he was.

"And say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph": Without any title, such as the father and counsellor of Pharaoh and governor of Egypt, only Joseph his son, which would be enough to revive the heart of Jacob.

"God hath made me lord over all Egypt": His exaltation to this dignity he ascribes, not to Pharaoh, but to God. Civil honor and promotion to worldly grandeur and dignity are from God, and not from man.

"Come down unto me, tarry not": The great business on his hands not permitting him to go to his father and fetch him to Egypt. He desires that he would come to him without delay, which would be greatly to the advantage of him and his family, and to their mutual comfort.

Genesis 45:10 "And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:"

The “Land of Goshen” was an Egyptian region (47:6 – 27), in the eastern delta area (47:11), not far from the court at Memphis. It was in the area around the Wadi Tumilat, a valley that was about 40 miles long.

It was highly suitable for cattle (47:4-6), but hated by the Egyptians (46:34). Thus, it provided good seclusion.

This isolation would provide for Israel’s distinctive cultural preservation under conditions favorable to their growth and unity.

Genesis 45:11 "And there will I nourish thee; for yet [there are] five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty."

"And there will I nourish thee": Provide for him and his family.

"For yet there are five years of famine": Still to come, two of the seven only being past.

"Lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty": His whole future generations would be consumed, as it would be in all probability, if he did not procure food for his family during the famine.

Joseph had shared, with his brothers, the dream God had revealed to him. There would be seven years of famine. If Jacob's family was already needing food after two years, then they would starve to death in five more years. Joseph sent his father word that he would take care of them through this terrible time.

Here is another symbolism. These seven years of famine is like the seven years of tribulation about to come to the earth. Woe be unto those who are left during the seven years of tribulation. We, like Joseph, must be prepared.

Genesis 45:12 "And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that [it is] my mouth that speaketh unto you."

"And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin": They were eyewitnesses of his being alive, having themselves seen him, and even Benjamin, who could not be suspected by his father of a fraud in imposing on him.

And some of them could doubtless remember his features, and had a visual proof of his being the very person, which they could with great evidence relate unto Jacob; as also his voice in speaking.

"That it is my mouth that speaketh unto you": Without an interpreter, as Aben Ezra, and in the Hebrew language, as the Targum and Jarchi. Which might confirm them, and likewise their father upon their report, that the governor was not an Egyptian, but a Hebrew. So by that and other concurrent testimonies that he must be Joseph.

Genesis 45:13 "And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

"And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt": His wealth and riches, his grandeur and dignity, his power and authority.

"And of all that you have seen": What a magnificent house he dwelt in; what a numerous train of servants he had. In what majesty he rode in the second chariot to the king; and what authority he exercised over the people. And what reverence they gave him, and what power he had, particularly in the distribution of corn.

"And ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither": For Joseph had an eager desire to see him, wherefore this is repeated.

The urgency of the hour was what Joseph was trying to get over to his brothers. He was, also, telling them, it was not second-hand information.

When the Trumpet blows to call us out of tribulation, it will be Jesus, Himself blowing the trumpet.

Genesis 45:14 "And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck."

"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept": On his neck first, because he was his own brother by father and mother's side. And he wept over him for joy that he had a sight of him once more. The word for "neck" is in the plural number, and being used, may signify that he fell first on one side of his neck, and then on the other, to show his great affection for him.

"And Benjamin wept upon his neck": Their love and the signs of it were reciprocal.

Verses 14-15: Reconciliation was accomplished with much emotion, which clearly showed that Joseph held no grudges and had forgiven them, evidencing the marks of a spiritually mature man (see note on 50:15-18). It had been 22 years since the brothers sold Joseph into slavery.

Genesis 45:15 "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

"Moreover, he kissed all his brethren": In their turns, to testify his real affection for them, and hearty reconciliation to them.

"And wept upon them": That is, upon their necks, as he had on Benjamin's.

"And after that his brethren talked with him": Being emboldened by this posture of his to them, and encouraged to believe that he really forgave them their sin against him.

And was truly reconciled unto them, and had a real affection for them, and had no reason to fear he would avenge himself on them. They entered into a free conversation, and talked of their father and their family, and the concerns of it and of what passed since the time he was separated from them.

Here too, the symbolism cries out. Benjamin represented the original (physical) Israel. We Christians are represented by the other brothers. Benjamin was a whole brother. The others were half-brothers.

The Jew is the natural branch. We have been adopted and grafted into the tree. They were no longer afraid, when he hugged and kissed them. All was forgiven, never to be remembered again.

Genesis 45:16 "And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants."

"And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house": The report was carried to court, and there it was told by some from Joseph's house, who had overheard what had passed, at least somewhat of it.

"Saying, Joseph's brethren are come": Perhaps they might call him by his Egyptian name, though the historian gives him his Hebrew name, and which was his right name, and by which he was best known to the Hebrews, for whose sake chiefly he wrote.

"And it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants": For Joseph being greatly beloved both by the king and his courtiers, who are meant by his servants. They were glad of an opportunity of showing their further regard to him, by their respect and courtesy to his relations and friends, who had been the means of providing for the welfare of the whole kingdom, and of saving all their lives.

Pharaoh's expressions of pleasure on this occasion were, no doubt sincere; whatever were those of his courtiers. Who might not make a difference to a stranger, and one that had been in a very low estate of life, to be raised above them, and have so much trust be placed in him. And the honor conferred upon him, and might dissemble in their respect to Joseph before their sovereign.

Though such might be the prudence and geniality of Joseph, and such the sense they had of their obligations to him in point of gratitude, that they might be really pleased to hear that his brethren were come. And the rather Pharaoh and his court might be the more delighted, because that it appeared that he came of a good family in Canaan.

Whereas they knew no more of him than of his having been a slave in Potiphar's house, and then cast into a prison for a crime charged upon him, out of which he was taken, and made the great man he was.

The final seal of approval for Joseph's relatives to immigrate to Egypt came unsought from Pharaoh (verses 17-20).

Pharaoh was delighted because Joseph's brothers had come, and it had made Joseph so happy. All this time, Joseph was highly respected by the Pharaoh and his servants. All Egypt was grateful to Joseph for his plan to keep them alive. Whatever it takes to make Joseph happy made everyone happy.

Genesis Chapter 45 Questions

1. How did it affect Jacob when Judah pled for Benjamin?
2. Who did Joseph send out?

3. What did Joseph do when he can stand it no longer?
4. Who heard Joseph crying?
5. When Joseph revealed who he was, what did he immediately ask them?
6. Why could the brothers not answer?
7. What did they deserve?
8. Relate this to Christianity.
9. Who did Joseph tell them planned this?
10. How many years of the famine had past?
11. How many years were left?
12. Are we always fully aware of the purpose, when God sends us out to do a job?
13. God told Abraham this would be the beginning of what?
14. What had God made Joseph to Pharaoh?
15. Does God ever use the ungodly to accomplish His purpose? Explain.
16. Where did Joseph send his brothers?
17. Why.
18. What land were they to dwell in?
19. What did the seven years of famine remind us of?
20. What similarity was there in the timing of Joseph sending for his father.
21. When we are called, who will call?
22. What message do we have that is the same message that Joseph was telling his brothers?
23. When did the brothers talk with Joseph?
24. Who did Benjamin represent spiritually?
25. Who did the brothers represent?
26. How did Pharaoh feel about all this?